

**CONSTRUCTIONS OF GENDER IN THE CONTEXT OF FREE
PRIMARY EDUCATION: A MULTI-SITE CASE STUDY OF THREE
SCHOOLS IN LESOTHO**

BY

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DECLARATION

I affirm that this entire thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my original work.

Pholoho Justice Morojele

As the candidate's supervisor/s, I have approved this thesis for submission.

Professor Deevia Bhana

Professor Relebohile Moletsane

DEDICATION

This thesis was written in memory of my daughter (Neo) who lived but never had a chance to see the light of day. Perhaps 'you' realised that dad and mum were under acute pressure, as dad was away in England busy doing a PhD. The birth of Fumane just about when the PhD was finished has been a monumental consolation.

I dedicate this thesis to my two children, Kutlo and Fumane. You two, always remember wisdom does not lie only in the most brilliant of minds. It lies beneath every spirit of humility and unquenchable thirst for a better and just human society.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis reports on a qualitative study of stakeholders' constructions of gender in the context of the Free Primary Education policy in three primary schools in Lesotho. Through the lens of the social constructionist paradigm, the thesis examines how parents, teachers and children living in and around these primary schools think, act, and feel in relation to gender in their academic and social worlds. It looks at the ways in which these stakeholders engage with issues of gender in Lesotho communities ravaged by gender inequality. Based on parents', teachers' and children's constructions of gender, the thesis suggests strategies that might help address inequitable gender relations in and around the primary schools.

The thesis grounded my personal life experiences, as the researcher, as crucial in the development of methodological strategies and processes of this study. In a flexible and responsive manner, the study utilised informal conversations, semi-structured interviews, observations, questionnaires and document analysis, as methods of data collection. It found that, influenced by 'discursive constructs' of providence and God's will, child-adult relations, naturalness of gender differences and attributes as well as the Basotho culture, parents and teachers constructed gender in ways that reinforced existing gender inequality in and around the primary schools. The structural and social organisation of the schools that tended to allocate girls and boys into rigid social categories, and parents' and teachers'

constructions of gender which reinforced inequitable gender relations, were found to have significant impact on the regulation of children's experiences and meanings of gender. The study found that children's experiences of gender informed how they actively engaged with issues of gender and the meanings they attached to being girls and boys.

The study traces how Basotho culture and religion have been fundamental to gender inequality and violence in Lesotho. These factors encouraged the schools to use structural/physical identities (such as having biological sex as a boy/girl), as the bases for allocation of girls and boys into rigid and inequitable social categories. The dominant discourses of gender that emanated from these factors, ascribed stereotypic attributes to males (boys and men) and females (girls and women) as means to ground inequitable gendered human aptitudes, which were used to justify gender inequality. The study also identifies ways in which girls defy the insistence on their subordination, and sees fault lines where gender inequality can be confronted without abandoning Basotho culture.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis reports on a qualitative study of stakeholders' constructions and experiences of gender in the context of the Free Primary Education (FPE) policy in three primary schools in Lesotho. The thesis examines how parents, teachers and children teaching, learning and living in and around these primary schools 'construct' gender in the context of FPE. It investigates the ways in which these stakeholders think, act and feel in relation to gender in their social and academic worlds. It asks: What are the creative and active ways in which teachers, parents and children engage with issues of gender in Lesotho communities ravaged by gender inequality, particularly in the context of FPE? A key aspiration is to unveil how these stakeholders' engagement with issues of gender might contribute to improving gender relations in and around the primary schools.

Using unstructured and semi-structured interviews, observations, questionnaires and document analysis, I spent many hours in the schools and communities documenting the views, ideas, and activities of parents, teachers and children in relation to gender. These participants shared their experiences of gender in the schools and their communities, and reflected on possible solutions to be considered in order to improve gender equality in the schools. This thesis is an

analysis of my observations, our conversations and the participants' responses on issues of gender equality in the context of FPE in the three primary schools.

'Construction' is a social term, used in this study to stress how gender identities are formed, negotiated and challenged in social relationships. As social relationships are at the heart of the thesis, I begin this chapter by locating the study in the geographical and social context of Lesotho. I explore the status and position of Basotho women and children within the traditional and cultural contexts in the country. The distinction between 'tradition' and 'culture' is an analytical one – because the focus of this study is not on the culture or acculturation, but rather on parents, teachers and children operating in specific cultural spheres and under particular cultural constraints. From this discussion I address the international policy framework for gender equality in education to which Lesotho (where this study is based) is a signatory. I also discuss the Lesotho policy context and briefly consider the objectives of FPE as well as the challenges that the Lesotho government considers important to overcome in order to improve gender equality. Then I address gender inequality in Lesotho's education system and in schools within the context of FPE as well as the purpose and focus of the study. Finally, I provide a brief outline and organisation of the thesis.

1.1.1 The Geographical Context of Lesotho

Lesotho (formerly Basotholand), which means 'Land of the Basotho,' is a small country in Southern Africa, with a total area of 30 350 square kilometres (Gay, Gill & Hall, 1996, p.37; Kishindo, 1993, p.2; Ferguson, 1990, p.3) and a total population of 1, 872, 721 (Bureau of Statistics, 2006). It is completely landlocked by the Republic of South Africa (see Appendix A). The Basotho (the people of Lesotho) speak Sesotho, referred to as Southern Sotho in some literature.

Lesotho is mostly a mountainous region, situated as it is in the Maluti Mountains, and due to its rough terrain and high altitude, it is commonly known as 'The Kingdom in the Sky'. The 'kingdom' denotes that Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy presently under the chieftaincy of King Letsie III. The Maluti mountains attain a height of more than 3 000 metres above sea level with the highest peak, *Thabana-Ntlenyana* (small beautiful mountain) reaching an elevation of 3 482 metres above sea level (Palmer & Poulter, 1972, pp.3-4; Gill, 1994, p.94; Gay, Gill & Hakk, 1996, p.37). The country is divided into ten administrative districts. Only 11% of the land is arable (Kingdom of Lesotho, <http://lycos.factmonster.com>). Most Basotho farmers are subsistence farmers, with maize, wheat, sorghum and beans being the major crops, and maize the staple food. In addition, the Maluti Mountains are well suited to the grazing of livestock such as cattle, goats, horses and donkeys (Gill, 1994, p.9).

Most communities in Lesotho are situated in rural areas where there is no proper sanitation, electricity and water. Basotho people living in the rural areas are mostly uneducated and still adhere strongly to the patriarchal practices and values of the Basotho culture (UNESCO, 2002). As such, gender inequality is rife in the rural communities. Religion and the notion of God also play a vital role in maintaining unequal power relations between males and females. It is the contention of this study that just like the androcentric practices of the Basotho culture, religion also serves to consolidate patriarchy in our society. The study believes that religion is an important agency of gender socialization determining societal norms and moral values (Inglehart & Norris, 2003), which promote gender inequality within Basotho communities.

In terms of religion, Lesotho is predominantly Christian, with the three main religious denominations being the Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC), the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and the Anglican Church of Lesotho (ACL). In tandem with religious beliefs and practices, communities in Lesotho are governed by various hierarchical and gendered traditional values and practices. I return to these in the section below.

The schools where this study was based are located in the Leribe district (see Figure 1.1 below), which is located in the North-Eastern part of Lesotho and shares boundaries with the Thaba-Tseka, Botha-Bothe and Berea districts as well as the Republic of South Africa. Leribe is the second most densely populated district with approximately 16% (296, 673) of the total population of

Lesotho residing in the district, after the capital Maseru, which is the most densely populated district with a total of approximately 23% (436, 399) people (Lesotho Bureau of Statistics, 2006). The HIV and AIDS infection rate in Lesotho is approximately 31% and Leribe has an infection rate higher than the national average, with 41% (Care South Africa–Lesotho, 2002). The district is currently under the chieftainship of ‘Mamosa Molapo Mots’oene who was installed into office by King Letsie III on May 2004 after the death of her husband (Lesotho News Agency, 2004).

Figure 1.1 The Map of Lesotho



The Kingdom of Lesotho is divided into ten districts, each headed by a district administrator. Each district has a capital known as a camptown. The districts are further subdivided into 80 constituencies, which consist of 129 local community councils. Most of the districts are named after their capitals. Hlotse, the capital of Leribe District is also known as Leribe. Conversely, the Berea District is sometimes called Teyateyaneng, based on its capital.

Source: Lesotho Bureau of statistics, 2006

1.2 THE CULTURAL CONTEXT: PATRIARCH AND THE POSITION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN LESOTHO

The popular words, “I am Moshesh and my sister is peace” (Gill, 1994, p.89) were uttered by the founder of the Basotho nation King Moshoeshoe 1, signifying that the king aspired to peace and unity. However, in this thesis, I argue that due to patriarchy and various traditional and cultural norms, customs and practices, the structure of Basotho society in fact created gender inequality and injustice. One such custom has been male and female circumcision, which is used to initiate young boys and girls into manhood and womanhood, and therefore, adulthood (Ashton, 1967, p.46). Circumcision has been used as a way of keeping unequal power relations, not only between adults and children, but also between men and women. To illustrate, an uncircumcised male, regardless of his age is not regarded as a real man. He is derogatively referred to as a “*leqai*” (an uncircumcised boy) or “moshemane” (little boy) (Ellenberger & McGregor, 1912, p.250). Mats’ela (1979, p.182) explains that traditionally, initiation was a very important institution with knowledgeable philosophers as teachers. The initiates were expected to be exemplary members of society and the nation after completing the course. Male initiates underwent training in such courses as sex

and life education, cultural history, military techniques, national philosophy and patriotism. Much of this training emphasised toughness and bravery (Van der Vliet, 1974, p.231). This tended to legitimate the popular expression amongst the initiates who have completed their course, “*ke monna kajeno*” (I am a man today). Henceforth, the young man could join other men’s discussions and deliberations and decision-making in meetings (*khotla*) as a full member of the community (Ellenberger & McGregor, 1912, p.283). At this stage, upon assuming an adult role, the young initiate was expected to be treated and respected by women, regardless of their age, in the same way as the older men were.

Similarly, girls were also expected to go to initiation school, otherwise an uncircumcised girl would be stigmatised as a ‘*lethisa*’ (little girl). The girls’ initiation took place in summer where they moved out to the veld for gathering of crops and other activities. Compared to the preparation of boys (and men) as custodians of patriarchy, in essence, girls were socialised in the service of patriarchy. While like their male counterparts they were taught about sex education, their education also emphasised politeness towards men, which foods were taboo for them (including sheep intestines, eggs, and food from distant places or *mats’ela-nokana* – food that has crossed many rivers) (Laydevant, 1953, p.63). In addition, girl initiates were prepared for their roles as wives, daughters’ in law and mothers. For example, they were taught to respect their father-in-law by not calling them by their names as a token of respect. Much of

this training encouraged girls to look forward to getting married and to respect their husbands, and defer to them in decision-making.

In present day Lesotho, most communities continue to practise initiation for boys and promote the upholding of patriarchy and male privilege, while only a few continue girls' initiation practices and the socialisation of girls in the service of patriarchy. Unfortunately, those who have discontinued initiation schools for girls have continued other customs and practices which continue to support and uphold male privilege and the subordination of girls and women.

Language is one of the factors which continues to strengthen the power of patriarchy within Basotho communities today. As a language, Sesotho is characterised by patriarchal usages. This study is informed by the extent to which day-to-day language use depicts gender stereotypes and promotes unequal power relations amongst and between male and female. Some Sesotho proverbs, for instance, are highly gendered and stereotypical in favour of men. Sekese (2002, p.65) identifies proverbs such as "*Tsoho la Monna ke mokolla*" (a man's hand is the marrow), which in essence means that without a man's assistance, women and society, would be completely helpless. A further example is identified by Machobane (1996, p.35), "*Monna ke ts'epe e nts'o*", which literally means that a man is a black iron, and physically strong and can endure suffering without breaking or complaining. Machobane shows how such proverbs signify the power of men, stating that even in difficult circumstances they persist. Indeed

proverbs like these give men praise, power and strength over women generally. In contrast, women are depicted as weak and fragile, as indicated by the proverb: *Ke mosali ha a nyaloa* (she is an unmarried woman¹). Surprisingly, this derogatory proverb is often used to describe men who are regarded as useless, for example, in terms of their work capabilities, and therefore, as like a concubine or mistress, or a woman who lives with a man who has not paid her family any bride price or '*bohali*'.

Using the same language, mothers and fathers often have different modes of communication with their children. For example, when mothers talk to children they are expected to be polite, whereas the father's speech is expected to be a bit harsh (Moloi, 1998, p.199). Basotho boys are socialised to use forceful and strong language. Normally the forceful language is used towards women, girls and young boys by older men when giving instructions. Moloi (1998, p.200) emphasises that as a result when men cry or perform their roles in a sloppy manner, they are said to be behaving like women.

Furthermore, praise poems/songs are geared towards male rulers. Males continue to be praised for various things such as conquests, battles and wars (Mangoaela, 2001). Traditionally men are usually the poets while women are merely meant to celebrate these poets by singing and ululating during performances. Arguably, language tends to symbolise the gender identity of the Basotho and contributes in many respects to the upholding of patriarchal power.

¹ Culturally, it is a thing of shame in Basotho communities to have a woman who is not married.

Within this unequal and gendered context, Lesotho, like many other countries which are members of the United Nations, has become a signatory to numerous international conventions and policies targeting gender inequality in communities and their structures, and particularly in education. As such, informed by this framework, Lesotho also has policies that aim to address gender inequality particularly in education. The following section discusses these.

1.3 THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

Education in Lesotho is structured around and informed by various international and national policies, including educational policies. Within this policy context, teachers, children and parents construct gender and negotiate and challenge gender inequality within the school and their communities. This section examines this policy context.

1.3.1 The International Policy Context

The 1990 Conference on Education for All (EFA), held in Jomtein, Thailand, pledged to achieve universal primary education by 2000. In this conference, countries committed themselves to provide their citizens with basic education as a fundamental human right and in particular, to promote girls' access to education and gender sensitive approaches to educational planning and development (UNESCO, 2002). The EFA targets were bolstered by the launch of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in a United Nations (UN) summit in

2000. The MDGs acknowledge the need for special attention to girls' education. Among the MDG targets is the aim to achieve gender equality in primary and secondary schools by 2005 and in all education sectors by 2015 (UNESCO, 2000).

Other initiatives including the E-9 initiative launched in 1993 and the Beyond Access: Gender, Education and Development Project (BAGEDP), established in 2003 declared their commitment to advancing gender equality in education in line with the MDGs. The E -9 initiative is made up nine high-population countries in the world (India, Indonesia, Mexico, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Nigeria, Egypt and Pakistan). Heads of states in these countries pledged to universalise education in order to provide their citizens with basic education as a fundamental tool to alleviating gender disparities (UNESCO, 2001). In a similar vein, the BAGEDP seeks to disseminate knowledge regarding gender equality and basic education so that policy-makers and other stakeholders can share and develop their understanding of how to achieve gender equitable education and meet the 2005 MDGs. The extent to which these goals are met in 2005 was a bench mark against which the objectives of the MDGs to infuse gender equality in all sectors of education in 2015 could be measured. The project aims to contribute to achieving the MDG goal of promoting gender equality by critically examining knowledge about how to achieve gender-equitable basic education (Beyond Access, 2006).

As a signatory to the EFA convention, Lesotho launched the Free Primary Education (FPE) Programme in 2000. Some of the objectives of FPE in Lesotho are to “make basic education accessible to all learners, and to make education equitable in order to eliminate disparities and inequalities” (Ministry of Education, 2000, p.9). The programme began in Grade One in 2000, with Grade 6, the last grade in the primary schooling sector, covered in 2006. However, according to a EFA global monitoring report (2003), despite significant progress achieved in the 1990s, girls continue to face sharp discrimination in access to schooling in a majority of developing countries, including Lesotho. Similarly, the 2003 BAGEDP report claims that large gender disparities in enrolment and achievements at school almost overwhelmingly militate against girls, and persist across the globe but particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

Currently, the question that remains is: Have the MDGs’ target for equitable education by 2005 been met? In 2005 member states were asked to review how they had progressed towards the attainment of the MDGs. The government of Lesotho’s reports stated that the country was making good progress in achieving MDGs for education. The report stated:

Lesotho] achieved some of the gender related goal targets, including the girl/boy school enrolment ratio. However, serious gender-related challenges remain. These include the passing into law of the pending Married Persons Equality Bill, which is expected to remove most of the gender-based cultural and legal constraints to the full participation of women in productive activities.

(Government of Lesotho, 2005, p.5)

We learn from this report that Lesotho has attained the MDGs in terms of the numbers (girl/boy school enrolment ratio), yet the country still has gender-based cultural and legal constraints which impede women's (and girls') full participation in productive activities. This thesis contends that the attainment of the girl/boy school enrolment ratio does not in itself mean there is gender equality in Lesotho schools, especially given the gender-based cultural and legal constraints that militate against gender equality. There is a need therefore to critically examine gender within the context of FPE, to explore how, for instance, cultural beliefs continue to shape gender relations in the schools and what this means for parents, teachers and children within the schools. As the Beyond Access project argues, the issue is not only to focus on the 'numbers' of children who do not have education or access to education, but also to qualitatively identify and analyse reasons for the uneven quality of education provided for girls and boys, the high level of dropouts and the difficulties that many children, particularly girls, have in progressing beyond a few years of formal schooling (Beyond Access Project, 2003). In other words, in order to understand gender in/equality in the primary schools, as the Beyond Access project cited above has aptly concluded, this thesis needed to look beyond the issue of girls' access to education, and to examine qualitative experiences of girls and boys.

The following section briefly discusses the education policy context in Lesotho, highlighting in particular, the objectives of the FPE policy and some challenges

that the government considers important in order to realise the goal of gender equality in the primary schools.

1.3.2 The National Education Policy Context in Lesotho

The system of formal education in Lesotho was established by the first missionaries who came to the country in 1833. During the early part of the 19th century, missionary education replaced the traditional way of learning offered through the circumcision schools and other traditional social institutions in Lesotho. Early education pioneered by missionaries became the standard form of education, such that even after the set up of a formal colonial administration in 1868 to administer the acquired colony of Lesotho, formal education was left in the hands of missionaries (Gosh, 1973).

The Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) established a teachers' training college in 1868, the so-called '*Sekolo sa Thabeng*' (the mountain college) in Morija for boys only (Epprecht, 1992). It was only in 1871 that the missionaries started a girls' school at *Thabana-Morena* in the Mafeteng district, which later was moved to Morija, and was then named Morija Girls' School (Ntimo-Makara, 1985). The basis for the establishment of this girls' school is reported to have been a response to King Moshoeshe's need of women who could train other Basotho women in home economics. The core rationale for establishing the Morija Girls' School was thus to train women to maintain the home and motherhood (Ntimo-Makara, 1990). As such, women in this school

were prohibited from taking courses in the fields such as the natural sciences (Goduka & Swadener, 1999).

The primary focus of the schools was the acquisition of literacy and the study of the Bible, the spiritual values and teachings of the church, including religious observances and participation in the Christian community. European cultural values were also emphasised; the adoption of a biblical name, the use of European clothing, and eating and living habits (Seotsanyana, 2002). The schools were designed to propagate Christian values and to develop Christian character, and the ability to read the Bible. Teachers of the time were expected to act as role models in propagating Christian values. Schools were to produce Christians, and teachers were to operate as facilitators (Gosh, 1973), and thus the development and expansion of Christianity served the social interests of missionaries.

Even today the structure and content of the Lesotho education system still has a significant influence of the missionary education, and the church still plays an important role in how schools are run. This is despite the fact that the schools are mostly classified as government 'public' schools. After political independence from Britain in 1965, primary schools in Lesotho were under the absolute proprietorship of different churches (namely the Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC), Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and the Anglican Church of Lesotho (ACL)). The government was only involved in the payment of the teachers. But

since 1995 the government took more control over the schools and various church secretariats from different churches were merged to form one government department (Teaching Service Commission), which is mainly responsible for the employment of teachers. The introduction of the FPE policy in 2000 has thus increased the responsibility that the Lesotho government is taking to ensure that schools operate effectively towards the attainment of the national goals.

1.3.2.1 The free primary education policy

The fundamental and underpinning principle of the education policy in Lesotho is the desire to ensure that every Mosotho has access to basic education (Ministry of Education, 2001). This desire takes expression in the FPE policy objectives which are to ensure that all Basotho have equal opportunities to basic education. This aspiration is premised on the fact that some Basotho children did not have the opportunity to attend school because, among other reasons, their parents could not afford to pay the school fees. Through increased stakeholder participation, the Lesotho government had a desire to forge linkages for a well-coordinated primary education system. The purpose of the FPE policy is also to ensure that boys and girls are provided with life skills that are relevant and useful within the context of Lesotho (Ministry of Education, 2000). To this end, the government infused a poverty eradication strategy within the FPE policy in order to allow parents to participate in the feeding scheme, one of the components of FPE. This initiative was intended to alleviate malnutrition and poverty-related

diseases among young children. The objectives of the FPE policy in Lesotho are to:

1. make basic education accessible to all pupils, and relevant to their needs
2. make education equitable in order to eliminate gender disparities and inequalities.
3. provide basic and necessary resources to enable every Mosotho child to enter and complete the primary education cycle of education
4. ensure that education is affordable to the majority of Basotho
5. provide and maintain high quality education as a basis for promoting development and societal advancement – thus fulfilling the government of Lesotho broad policy of eradicating poverty and illiteracy
6. equip every Mosotho² with basic skills and knowledge to live a meaningful life and cope with his/her environment.

(Ministry of Education, 2000, p.5)

The FPE policy requires that parents send their children, regardless of age, to school without paying any school fees (Lehohla, 1999). However, with no legal implications against parents who may not send their children to school, this policy intention is not enforceable by law. This led to some writers (Seotsanyana, 2002) in Lesotho to assert that FPE resembles the colonial education established in the early 1920s, which too was free but not compulsory – not enforceable by law.

There are several critical challenges that the Ministry of Education in Lesotho has identified in order to implement FPE and improve gender equality. These include, first, mobilising the required financial and human resources to provide free and compulsory basic education at the time when global aid flows to developing countries are on the decline. Second, the government is faced with the challenge to sustain an adequate number of teachers against high attrition due to factors

² Mosotho is a singular of Basotho, which means the people of Lesotho.

that include unattractive conditions of service for teachers and the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Third, to implement FPE requires forging of relationships with NGOs and civil society in education in order to promote coordination and participation amongst various stakeholders (Ministry of Education, 2005, p.43). The government of Lesotho believes that addressing the above challenges would afford the country a chance to implement FPE effectively and improve gender equality in the primary schools.

Within the context of FPE and in line with the MDGs and EFA, the Lesotho government identifies gender equality as a major goal in the education system (Ministry of Education, 2005, p.26). Through its policies, the government is committed not only to encouraging many boys and girls to enrol in schools but also to ensuring that they receive good quality free primary education. Against the background of the pervasive patriarchal power in Lesotho these policy intentions may prove futile if they are not supported by the wider society. Children in the primary schools will be socialised by and into the patriarchal regime, and related attitudes and practices will live on through their relationships with their parents, teachers and grandparents. Through their experiences of social relationships at home and at school, they will construct ways of engaging with the social world, including gendered social relationships. The extent to which patriarchal attitudes and practices permeate the schooling processes, and children inventively and creatively engage with these processes to construct their gender identities, has informed this study.

Motivated by the principle of gender equality as stipulated by FPE, this study set out to investigate ways in which parents, teachers and children construct gender and gender in/equality in three Lesotho rural primary schools. The choice of rural schools was informed by the report from UNESCO (2003) that gender inequality is an intractable problem in Lesotho rural schools. This might be partly due to low levels of educational attainment by most people in the rural communities, or a tendency for rural communities to adhere to cultural beliefs and practices which do not promote gender equality. The study examines the beliefs and practices of parents, teachers and children concerning gender, and how such beliefs and practices affect gender equality in the schools.

The next section addresses the ways in which the scenario of gender inequality plays out in the country's education system and within the context of FPE in the primary schools.

1.4 GENDER INEQUALITY IN LESOTHO'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

Historically, it was not general practice in Lesotho to educate girls as the belief was that they would get married and move away from their families (Modo & Ogbu, 1998; Mosetse, 1998). But with various dynamics that affected Basotho people during and after the colonial era, such as the migrant labour system to South African mines, which guaranteed jobs for young men with barely any formal education, the practice of educating girls became more accepted (Molapo,

2005). This trend has enormously increased the enrolment of girls in schools (UNESCO, 2005). Furthermore, the rate of literacy among women is 94% compared to 74% of men (UNESCO, 2004, p.2). Yet, despite these trends, patriarchal values still pervade the Lesotho socio-cultural context and the schooling context in particular, and more men than women still occupy the important decision-making positions in the various institutions in the country. In its report to the United Nations (UN) where countries reported their progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goal 3 which focuses on gender equality, the Lesotho government reported that the country is facing serious gender-based cultural and legal constraints which militate against women and girls (Government of Lesotho, 2005).

It appears that having an increased number of educated women and girls in the primary schools does not change and challenge patriarchal ideologies and practices within communities in the country. The extent to which, and ways in which patriarchal ideologies and practices suffuse the Lesotho primary schooling system has informed this study. The thesis is premised on the assumption that when patriarchal ideologies and practices remain pervasive, girls and boys continue to receive unequal quality of education in the schools. This state of affairs reinforces and perpetuates unequal power relations between boys and girls and thus helps sustain patriarchal power in the schools and communities. The thesis is also premised on the notion that patriarchal power breeds gender inequality and thus compromises the quality of schooling experiences for the

primary school children, especially the girls. As such, a study is needed which illuminates the dynamics of gender constructions and negotiation in social relationships in order to shed light on how we might address gender inequality within the schools. In this study, I set out to investigate how stakeholders in three schools in a school district in Lesotho engage with issues of gender inequality and the ways in which these communities might challenge and possibly change patriarchal ideologies and practices within the schools.

1.4.1 Gender Inequality in Lesotho Primary Schools

The inception of FPE in Lesotho resulted in an influx of children (girls and boys) coming to school in great numbers (Ministry of Education, 2002). However, girls and boys who attend school in the context of FPE still receive inequitable treatment in and around the schools on the basis of their gender even though one of the prime objectives of FPE was to eliminate gender inequalities in the primary schools. For instance, studies conducted by Mphale, Rwambali and Makoe (2002) and Morojele (2004) observed that in Lesotho primary schools, and within the context of FPE girls are still used as caregivers to their sick relatives and in housework, and boys for herding animals to the extent that they cannot attend school (Young & Ansell, 2003). Cultural practices in and around the schools, and the social construction of girls and boys by their parents, teachers and their peers as well as by children themselves still promote and reinforce inequitable power relations amongst and between girls and boys.

Schooling within the context of FPE continues to reinforce inequitable treatment amongst and between girls and boys on the basis of their gender. This invariably compromises the quality of children's life and learning experiences of girls and boys in the schools. On their everyday encounters primary school children have to endure this punitive culture of inequitable treatment and many either frequently absent themselves from the school or drop out (Mphahlele, Rumbali & Makoe, 2002). Even though the FPE policy so clearly stipulates gender equality as one of its prime goals, it appears that this has not translated into the everyday living experiences of primary schooling. Primary schooling in the context of FPE continues to underpin traditional gender stereotypes. This denotes that official policy prescriptions are not enough to challenge or change the strongly held beliefs about gender in locally situated contexts such as the primary schools.

In order to contribute to the ways in which we can address gender inequality in the context of FPE, this study set out to investigate the ways in which parents, teachers and children in Lesotho primary schools construct and engage with issues of gender. The thesis is underpinned by the belief that gender is a socially constructed phenomenon. Therefore, attempts to improve gender equality should be premised on the understanding of how parents, teachers and children in locally situated contexts such as the primary schools make meaning of and engage with gender. Through this investigation, I hope to illuminate the ways in which parents, teacher and children in the primary schools regulate, negotiate, contest and challenge patterns of gender conduct, and learn therefore how we

might address gender inequality in the primary schools, and within the context of FPE.

In the following section I address the purpose and focus of the study and highlight the research questions that guided the study.

1.5 PURPOSE AND FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to investigate the ways in which parents, teachers and children living, teaching and learning in and around the three primary schools in Lesotho 'construct gender' in the context of FPE. The study focused on three primary schools (under the three main church proprietorships –namely Lesotho Evangelical Church, Roman Catholic Church and Anglican Church of Lesotho) to establish the roles that religion plays to influence constructions of gender. It aimed at exploring the implications of these participants' constructions of gender on gender in/equality and what we could learn from such constructions which might help address gender inequality in Lesotho primary schools. The rationale for undertaking this study was informed by my personal experiences as a boy child who grew up in a family headed by an old father in a rural village in Lesotho (see Chapter 4 for details). The nature of gender inequality in this context informed my decision to conduct my PhD thesis in Lesotho in an attempt to find more about ways in which gender inequality in this context could be addressed. The study is located within the social constructionist paradigm. This was chosen because of its potential to illuminate multiple and rich ways through

which gender is constructed within social relations (see Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of this paradigm). As such, the main research question which guided the study was:

1. How do parents, teachers and children construct gender within the context of FPE in Lesotho primary schools?

The secondary questions were:

- What implications do parents', teachers' and children's constructions of gender have on gender in/equality in primary schools in the context of FPE?
- What can we learn from these participants' constructions of gender which might help address gender inequality in the primary schools?

To address the above questions, a multi-site case study approach was used. The study utilised both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. A key methodological focus of the study was on parents', teachers' and children's discourses and performances of gender. I used a multiple method approach, which involved unstructured and semi-structured interviews, observations, questionnaires and document analysis as methods of data production. A key analytical focus was on factors that inform discourses and performances of gender, with the aim to illuminate processes by which beliefs and practices about gender were constructed and changed (see Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of the research design and methodology).

1.6 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis aims to contribute to knowledge not only about how parents, teachers and children construct gender, but also about the factors that influenced these participants' constructions of gender. It illuminates how these participants living in Lesotho primary schools, where gender inequality is so deeply entrenched, construct beliefs and practices in relation to gender. It investigates these phenomena in children's peer relations and in adult-child relations, and looks at the continuities and discontinuities in the ways these participants engage with issues of gender. Through this analysis, the study aims to identify dynamic processes which recur in parents' and teachers' perceptions of gender and children's experiences and enactments of gender across various realms of their social and academic lives. It considers how the participants' perceptions, experiences and enactments of gender both perpetuated and challenged gender inequality in the primary schools within the context of FPE.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature for the study. It discusses broad debates about FPE and gender equality in education, and the social construction of children within Basotho community. The chapter also reviews the literature on the social perspectives of gender and schooling, addressing schools as sites for the construction of gender and treating children as active social agents. Chapter 3 begins by addressing the social constructionist paradigm as the guiding

theoretical framework of the study. It then addresses the discursive and materialist theories as conceptual and analytical tools for the study.

Chapter 4 discusses how this study set out to investigate these social processes (constructions of gender), through discussing some in depth the ethical dilemmas of researching gender, particularly with children, as a man. The author shows how he attempted to solve these dilemmas through a social constructionist epistemology and through developing ethnographic and participatory methods. The study is then located within three primary schools in Lesotho namely Molalana, Tsuoe-Tsuoe and Maloaleng primary schools.

Subsequent chapters present the findings of the study. Chapter 5 provides broad structural and social scenarios under which the schools operated; highlighting salient gender issues for parents, teachers and children in these schools. Chapter 6 unveils the role that parents and teachers played to challenge/reinforce gender inequality in the schools. It reveals various discursive spheres of influence within the contexts where the study was undertaken which informed ways in which parents and teachers perceived gender. Chapter 7 discusses children's experiences and meanings of gender. It illustrates how various forms of gender-based violence (such as sexual violence, harassment and gender-motivated fights) which characterised children's experiences of gender happened as a result of dominant constructions of gender. It also denotes how children's conformity to dominant constructions of gender compromised the

quality of their schooling experiences, as well as how this was a source of gender-based indiscipline in the schools.

The final chapter considers further implications of the study, reflecting on the methodology, discussing the importance of the findings and identifying future directions for research, policy and practice. It concludes that through engaging local stakeholders and particularly children as they talk and enact gender in their ordinary schooling encounters, we can find ways to resist and prevent the continuation of gender inequality in social relations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: RESEARCH CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

I begin this chapter by sketching the broad debates in Africa about FPE and gender equality in education. As discussed in Chapter 1, amongst other things this study is informed by the principle of FPE as a means through which the Lesotho government wishes to improve gender equality in the primary schools. Therefore, it is important to understand the major international debates around the development and implementation of FPE across different countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. These debates are useful since they also highlight some challenges that countries encounter in their efforts to implement FPE. From these challenges it is possible to deduce the strategies that could be employed in the implementation of FPE and the improvement of gender equality in the primary schools. This thesis aims to contribute to the literature by offering new ways of thinking about FPE and gender in Lesotho primary schools. These new ways of thinking derive from the gaps and shortcomings in the existing literature.

The chapter also reviews the literature on gender and the cultural constructions of children within Basotho communities. It illustrates how, in particular, the

concept of an 'heir' within Basotho communities implies that first born boy children are valued more than other children. The literature illuminates how children are differently constructed and what this implies for gender relations amongst and between boys and girls within these communities. This is premised on the notion that patterns of relationships amongst girls and boys based on the cultural constructions of children and gender in their communities might impact on and manifest themselves in gender constructions, and in gender relations within the context of FPE in Lesotho primary schools.

The literature on the social perspectives of gender and schooling is also reviewed in this chapter. Here I discuss schools as sites for the construction of gender and children as active social agents. The chapter explores the active role that primary school children take in policing and punishing gender constructions or performances which do not automatically signify dominant and hegemonic³ masculinities/femininities (Bhana, 2002; Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Epstein & Telford, 2003). Finally, I address the question of power and gender in social relations and show how some forms of masculinities are accorded power status over other forms, including femininities. I argue that the power of the androcentric values within the primary schools and children's strivings to take up some of the mostly unattainable forms of identity because one is male or female are the

³ The term hegemonic derives from the word 'hegemony'. This refers to dominance by apparent consent rather than force (Drake & Owen, 1998, p.17). This is normally due to successful diffusion of ideas, values and social rules about, for instance, what it means to be a girl or a boy.

functional source of degraded gendered relations (Moore, 1994) which breed gender inequality in the primary schools.

The chapter concludes by reviewing some of the work that has been initiated to understand the vital role primary schooling plays in the construction of gender and how children actively take part in the construction of gender. It appreciates that such studies have not been conducted in Lesotho primary schools and within the context of FPE, which partly justifies the significance of this study.

2.2 FPE AND GENDER EQUALITY

This section reviews literature related to some of the broad debates in Africa, where FPE in its various forms is being implemented, and its relation to gender equality in education. Thesis views gender as a form of social construct, some form of performance (Butler, 1990), and a way of communicating which often has multiple meanings. It conceptualises gender equality as a process in which such social constructs, performances and ways of communicating work to promote equitable power relations amongst and between various categories of human identities. The section reviews some of the major international debates around the development and implementation of FPE as well as some challenges in the implementation of FPE across different countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

2.2.1 Debates on FPE and Gender Equality in Education

The origin of the concept of Education for All (EFA) is generally associated with the World Conference in Jomtein in 1990 which resulted in the World Declaration of EFA, and a Framework for Action to meet basic learning needs (Inter-Agency Commission, 1990). Since then, there has been increasing consensus in certain United Nations agencies that FPE is an essential aspect of basic human development (UNICEF, 2001; United Nations, 2000). In other international meetings such as the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in September 1994, the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in March 1995, and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995, member states signalled strong investment in schooling as a top priority for developing countries as a strategy for addressing issues of gender inequality (McGee, 2000).

At the point of assessing progress made by member states in 2000, the World Conference in Dakar, Senegal, where 180 countries committed themselves to providing quality education for all by 2015, was a response to failure by many countries to keep the 1990 Jomtein promise, and was also a reaffirmation to try to keep the promise of EFA (Sperling, 2001). The commitment to provide quality education for all was also bolstered by the launch of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in a United Nations (UN) summit in 2000. The MDGs

acknowledged the need for special attention to girls' education and among its targets was the aspiration to achieve gender parity in primary and secondary schools by 2005 with the aim to achieve gender equality in all education sectors by 2015. The inception of FPE was but one way through which countries wanted to ensure that primary school children receive free education of good quality, with the ultimate aim of addressing gender inequality in the primary schools.

The question of FPE and EFA has sparked considerable debate among some researchers. Ocheng's (1999) study on 'trends towards the achievement of universal primary education and efforts towards attainment of gender balance' identified a tendency for governments to prioritise ensuring that boys and girls enrol in the primary schools over ensuring that after enrolment, boys and girls receive quality education throughout, and that they complete a primary school of high quality. This tendency has been partly due to the confusion in how people conceptualise FPE and EFA. Buchert (2002) in an analysis of EFA and Dakar Conventions argued that FPE is not the same thing as EFA:

Ensuring that all children have access to a primary education cycle of a specified number of years, [like providing FPE], is not the same as ensuring that all children have learning outcomes which permit them to participate fully in development – which is the expanded concept of EFA launched in Jomtein in 1990. In Dakar, the goal of primary education for all by 2015has been set in context of provision of quality education throughout the education system [and] makes specific reference to education, learning and life-skills,[with] EFA understood as a lifelong learning process for which basic education [FPE] is the foundation.

(Buchert, 2002, pp.7-8)

Ahmed and Chowdhury (2005) in a study that examines the concepts of gender parity, gender equality and gender equity as used in EFA discourse and practice purported that both the Dakar Goals and MDGs related to gender identified the removal of disparities in primary education as a target to be achieved by 2005. In addition, the EFA goals include aspects of quality education and learning outcomes:

The parity target also does not require that all children have access to education, but only that girls have access in the proportion as boys. Parity, in this sense, presumably could be achieved even if the majority of the girls in a country did not participate in education.

(Ahmed & Chowdhury, 2005, p.3)

As mentioned above, many countries seem to give priority to ensuring that boys and girls access education for a specified number of years without paying much attention to the quality of education these children receive and experiences they have in schools. This was also noted in the World Conference on EFA, held in Dakar in 2000, which concluded that, as a result of focusing on numbers rather than the quality of education children receive once they enrol in schools, performance in the primary schools fell below desired levels in countries where FPE was implemented (UNESCO, 2001). In a study on how close the world was to achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of universal primary completion, Bruns, Rakotomalala and Mingat (2003) noted that focusing on numbers rather than quality of education that boys and girls receive once they enrol is one major deficit in many countries which have implemented FPE in Africa. Bruns, Rakotomalala, and Mingat (2003) also support Buchert, (2002) and Ahmed and Chowdhury (2005) that there is a vital distinction between the

attainment of universal enrolment and universal provision of quality education, with a further important distinction between attaining universal enrolment in the short term and sustaining it over time. The study stipulates that increased enrolment of girls and boys in schools should be complemented by provision of quality education which is sustainable.

These debates point to the centrality of understanding FPE from the point of view of not only paying attention to the number of boys and girls who enrol in schools as a result of FPE, but from the point of view of the quality of education boys and girls receive, including their general well-being while in school. Such well-being is influenced by a variety of factors including their experiences of gender and gender in/equality in and around the school. As discussed in Chapter 1, this thesis is premised on the viewpoint that FPE should not only lead to an increase in enrolment rates, but should also result in improvements in the quality of education and learning outcomes, with a particular focus on the everyday lived experiences of girls and boys in the school. In order to illuminate the dynamics of the quality of everyday lived experiences of girls and boys, and particularly with regards to gender equality in schools, this study employed qualitative and ethnographic methodologies (see Chapter 4 for details). These methodologies have been useful in revealing ways in which the implementation of FPE in Lesotho primary schools is falling short of the goals of ensuring that children receive and complete quality education and of ensuring boys' and girls' general well-being as well as of improving gender equality in the schools.

As also expressed in EFA, the Dakar declaration and the MDGs, eliminating gender disparities in educational provision for boys and girls, and improving gender equality is an overarching rationale behind the implementation of FPE across different countries. For example, the Dakar Framework Goal Five is specifically to:

...eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

(UNESCO, 2002, p.101)

The MDGs also have the same objectives indicating how gender significantly features in the provision of FPE. For instance, MDGs 2 and 3 were respectively, to:

- Achieve universal primary education;
- Empower women and promote equality between women and men

(UNESCO, 2003, p.4)

This justifies the move by this study to research gender in Lesotho primary schools, and within the context of FPE in order to find out the extent to which this policy which is operating in the context of, and as a way of achieving the MDGs and the goals of the Dakar framework is working to improve gender relations in these schools. Herz and Sperling (2004) asserted that educating girls and boys is an achievable goal if supported with appropriate education reforms, resources and commitment to ensure that all children are at school. Therefore, research must be undertaken in order to understand how reforms such FPE, as well as

resources and strategies could be tailor-made to address the needs and expectations of the local communities with regards to the implementation of the innovation and understanding gender relations in the primary schools.

However, recent studies (Herz, 2006; Salmon, 2003; McGee, 2000) have identified some challenges associated with the implementation of FPE and the improvement of gender equality in schools. The following subsection reviews the literature on the challenges associated with the implementation of FPE and improvement of gender equality in the primary schools.

2.2.2 Challenges in the Implementation of FPE

Literature with regards to the challenges in the implementation of FPE and its focus on improving gender equality in the primary schools mainly focuses on the significance of the provision of resources, elimination of traditional gender stereotypes and some cultural gendered practices. It also focuses on curriculum reform as well as the adaptation of FPE to suit the local demands as fundamental for the effective implementation of FPE, and the improvement of gender equality in the primary schools. I discuss these in the section below.

2.2.2.1 Provision of adequate resources

The issue of provision of resources is closely linked to the fact that the introduction of FPE has resulted in an influx of children coming to school in great

numbers in many African countries. To illustrate, primary enrolment in Lesotho grew by 80% between the year 2000 and 2002 (Lesotho Ministry of Education, 2002). In neighbouring Malawi, because of the high increase in enrolment, children had to learn under trees and were exposed to cold and other hardships as the school classrooms could not accommodate the number of children who came to school (Ministry of Education Malawi, 2001). In Kenya, in an analysis of primary schools enrolment titled 'Massive Enrolments of Pupils in Kenya,' Salmon (2003) claimed that teacher-pupil ratio increased drastically despite government initiatives to employ more teachers as a result of the implementation of FPE. Furthermore, in a study focusing on reducing poverty and achieving universal primary education in Uganda, McGee (2000) claimed that the schooling systems are ill-prepared for the influx of children coming to school. The author went on to assert that the matter of massive enrolment without appropriate resources masks some issues of education quality which are also of serious concern in the context of FPE. Therefore, provision of infrastructure, school facilities such as desks and books, and hiring of more teachers is seen as a challenge facing African countries in the implementation of FPE (UNSECO, 2002).

Further afield, in a study focusing on educating girls in South Asia, Herz (2006) suggested that providing basic shelter and sanitation, community support and parental participation have positive effects on children's remaining in schools. Therefore provision of such resources could assist in the effective

implementation of FPE which aims to enrol and retain girls and boys in schools. In addition to providing sufficient resources, McGee (2000) also noted the significance for schools to develop capabilities to tackle financial, administrative and institutional matters, including the management of resources in the school.

2.2.2.2 Gender stereotypes in the school curriculum

A second challenge related to the implementation of FPE is that the primary school curriculum is said to contain messages that portray, or reinforce certain gender stereotypes. It is the contention of this thesis that gender inequality in the primary schools will not adequately be addressed if the overt as well as the hidden curricula, for example, continue to contain traditional gender stereotypes and to support unequal gender relations. In support of this contention, Aikman, Unterhalter and Challender (2005) claim that there are important questions to be asked regarding what girls and boys are being taught about themselves in formal schooling, whether for instance, education institutions allow girls' effective participation, and whether and how the existing inequitable situations of boys and girls are enhanced or diminished by the schooling they receive.

To illustrate, a 2002 UNICEF report suggests that in Nigeria boys are given more opportunities to ask and answer questions, to use learning materials, and lead groups, and girls are given less time on tasks than boys in science. Responding to similar trends, in order to address the gender bias within the context of FPE, the Malawi government has set up a 'Gender Appropriate Curriculum Unit' to

improve the primary school curriculum, reform teacher training and textbooks (Herz, 2006, p.65).

This thesis argues that gender biased practices in the FPE school curriculum take their root from the cultural values and practices within some African communities which also serve to promote unequal power relations between males and females. HIV and AIDS and poverty also play a vital role to bolster some of these cultural values and practices. The manner in which girls and boys are affected by HIV and AIDS, and the role they are expected and made to play in response to this pandemic, are informed by the cultural values and construction of girls and boys in their communities. For instance, in a Lesotho based study on the comprehensive educational, social and legal scenery for the protection of boys and girls against the adverse effects of HIV and AIDS, Kimane (2005) found that most girls get involved in household fragmentation (having to leave their families and labour for subsistence) because of their role as care-givers, or to make a living as a result of sick or dead parents due to HIV and AIDS. It is the contention of this study that the effective implementation of FPE and improvement of gender equality in the primary schools will be adversely affected if girls and boys have to leave school because of HIV and AIDS. The section below attends to these issues.

2.2.2.3 HIV and AIDS, poverty and cultural practices

The broader obstacle of poverty, HIV and AIDS and livelihood constraints continue to keep girls and boys in varied labour environments in order to help their families to subsist (Mphale, Rwambali & Makoe, 2002). For instance, studies conducted by Young and Ansell (2003); Colvin and Sharp (1999) and Morojele (2004) found that young boys in Lesotho drop out of school to go and work in the mines or to tend family cattle. These studies also found that girls in Lesotho primary schools are taken out of school to care for sick relatives or look for jobs to support their families when parents cannot work due to HIV and AIDS. The obstacles of poverty, HIV and AIDS and livelihood are bolstered by cultural practices within many African societies which adversely affect girls particularly.

Using a detailed case study from two African countries, Colclough, Rose and Tembon (2000) argue that adverse cultural practices impede attendance and performance of girls at school, relative to boys. These include care-giving, baby-sitting and performing domestic chores which are culturally regarded as girls' responsibilities. These authors also contend that gender inequalities in schooling will not necessarily be reduced as the numbers of children increase in schools as long as these cultural practices persist. Another study by Konadu-Agyemang and Shabaya (2004) on the question of unequal access to education among males and females in Ghana, Zimbabwe and Kenya found that female illiteracy

rates are still high compared to those of male due to entrenched cultural attitudes to keep females out of the education system.

In Lesotho, as briefly discussed in chapter 1, cultural attitudes tended to keep girls out of the education system as the belief was often that they would get married and move away from their families (Modo & Ogbu, 1998; Mosetse, 1998). However, with various dynamics that affected Basotho people during and after the colonial era, such as the migrant labour system to South African mines, which guaranteed jobs for young men with barely any form of formal education, the practice of educating girls became more accepted (Molapo, 2005). This trend has enormously increased the enrolment of girls in schools and the rate of literacy among women compared to men. Yet, in its report to the United Nations (UN) on how far the country has advanced towards the attainment of the MDGs on gender, the Lesotho government reported that despite the high school enrolment and literacy rates among girls and women, the country is still facing serious gender-based cultural and legal constraints which militate particularly against women and girls access to and success in the labour market (Government of Lesotho, 2005). Leach's (1998) study titled, 'Gender Education and Training: An International Perspective' found that the low value placed on women's and girls' lives is also reflected in the inequitable access between females and males to education.

The patriarchal nature of Basotho society has also largely informed the structural and social organisation of primary schooling and the labour market, and this makes it difficult for girls and women to be affirmed and assume a non-subservient social status. For instance, even though in Lesotho girls and women are generally more literate and educated than boys and men respectively more power and social status is still accorded to boys than girls regardless of their (girls') education/levels of literacy (see section 2.3 below) and more men, as compared to women, continue to occupy important decision-making positions (Women and Law in Southern Africa, 1998).

2.2.2.4 Adaptation of FPE to suit local contexts

There is a need to recognise the importance of adapting the FPE policy to Many of the African countries implementing FPE have recognised the importance of adapting the policy to suit local needs and contexts. The local people's interests can best be articulated by key stakeholders such as teachers, parents and learners in the schooling systems. Aikman, Unterhalter and Challender (2005) note the significance of considering involvement of all stakeholders in curriculum reforms such as FPE so that the ways in which the curriculum is defined and delivered take account of various needs and interests of all children, teachers and parents in the school. The authors voice some concerns that FPE lacks rigour in terms of how it could be translated into practice at a school-based

context and suggest that this could impede effective implementation, which could also adversely affect gender equality in the primary schools:

While a range of declarations and conventions provide written support for ideas about gender equality and human rights, the ways in which these values can form part of the processes of putting a curriculum into practice have been hardly considered.

(Aikman, Unterhalter & Challender, 2005, p.45)

Thus, unless we can find ways of translating into practice the values and aspirations contained in the international and national declarations and conventions on gender equality in the primary schools, the goal of improving gender equality (as enshrined in the FPE policy) will not be realised. This raises the need to adapt FPE to suit the demands and challenges of the local communities, and to consider the ways in which the aspirations of FPE can be made part of the day-to-day schooling practices. As highlighted above, the involvement of all the stakeholders in the implementation of FPE could aid in the adaptation of this policy into the local school contexts, and in making FPE part of everyday schooling practice. This study sought to investigate the ways in which the three primary schools selected in this study have adapted FPE to suit their local contexts and the extent to, and ways in which this contributes to or militates against gender equitable school policies and practices.

2.2.2.5 Interlude

The literature discussed in this section highlights the broad debates of FPE and gender equality in education and some challenges for implementing FPE across

various contexts in African countries. While the literature has focused on gender, it has tended not to take into account parents', teachers' and children's experiences of FPE in general and of gender equality/inequality in the context of the policy in the schools. In a study focusing on the processes of identity construction, Unterhalter (1998) argued that policy initiatives are based on little local knowledge and ignore the importance of day-to-day dynamics, including the link between education and subjectivities. This suggests that investigating parents', teachers' and children's constructions of gender in order to understand the ways in which the policies impact on their day to day activities and on gender equality in the primary schools is significant. Similarly, Bhana (2002) posited that exploring such subjectivities, discourses and the micro workings of power in social relationships is significant to consider in the work towards gender equality. Thus, this study seeks to address this deficit by providing a detailed snapshot of how parents, teachers and children in three primary schools construct and enact gender.

The following section reviews the literature on the cultural construction of gender and children in Lesotho.

2.3 CULTURE, GENDER AND CHILDREN IN LESOTHO

In this section I discuss various ways through/in which children are constructed within the Basotho communities. Understanding how children are constructed and the social positioning of children helps to explicate various dynamics which

breed and reinforce gender inequality within the Basotho communities, and by extension, within the Lesotho primary schools. Generally Basotho children are constructed as a minority social group – continually under the headship/guardianship of parents and relatives. This ensures that children are either not actively involved in matters that affect their lives or at least that their active involvement in such matters is not expressly acknowledged or recognised. Within these communities differential social and power status is accorded to children according to their birth order (in the case of boys) and according to whether they are boys or girls. I discuss these below.

2.3.1 The Social Positioning of Boys in Lesotho

Traditionally, more power and social status in Basotho communities is accorded to a first born male child, and in the case of polygamous marriages, the first born male child of the first wife (*Mojalefa* - an “heir”) – a concept denoting that the child would inherit all the family property and of course, all responsibilities upon the death of his father. In many cases, the ‘heir’ is expected to assume the obligations of his position even before he actually succeeds to the status (Women & Law in Southern Africa, 1994), including before the death of his parents.

The Sesotho translation of the concept ‘heir’, *Mojalefa* is literally ‘the one who eats the inheritance’ but also ‘the one who eats and pays’ (Molapo, 2005). The

first meaning presupposes inheritance of property only, whereas the second meaning places emphasis on both property and responsibility. The second meaning is more in line with the provisions of the laws of Lerotholi (Lesotho customary laws, 1942⁴), and means that the 'heirs' have to work harder to pay for what they are due to eat. On the one hand, this disadvantages first-born boy children as sometimes they are prevented from or taken out of school so that they can look after the family property. Besides, some heir boys do not see the need to attend school as going to school is not valued above the significance of carrying out or preparing to carry out family responsibilities (Women & Law in Southern Africa, 1998). On the other hand, such boys tend to be valued to the extent that their education is often viewed as more important than that of their other siblings, particularly that of girls in the family.

Normally boys who are not the heirs are discouraged from wanting to compete with the heirs for the family property. The use of the concept like "*toeba ea lithako*" - a "mouse of the ruins" (Women & Law in Southern Africa, 1994, p.163) (a derogative term) referring to a last born boy who takes the responsibilities to look after his mother and siblings does not only express the differential expectations of Basotho on the roles that first born male children and the last born male children must assume in society. This concept also denotes some reluctance or discouragement for boys who are not the first-borns to assume

⁴ Customary laws refer to the customs and traditions of the Basotho which have been part of them for centuries. Originally these were not written down, but in 1942 King Lerotholi wrote these laws down for reference in the judiciary and also as means to preserve Basotho customs which were seen to be under threat due to the introduction of the Western (commonly known as the Dutch) laws. These laws are still intact even today and thus Lesotho has a dual legal system with customary laws having the same legal force and recognition as the Dutch/Common laws in the judiciary.

such responsibilities, and thus serve to reproduce asymmetrical power status amongst fellow brothers based on their birth order.

There are changing attitudes though within the Basotho communities regarding the custom of the first-born boys being the 'heirs'. Laziness and irresponsibility of some 'heirs', because they know that their parents' property will eventually belong to them, are some of the factors that have led to this change. Such factors have affected the custom of inheritance to the extent that some parents even prefer to have their daughters or younger sons as the 'heirs' of their property. Nowadays popular sentiments amongst the Basotho such as, 'the eldest son just slithers like a snake into a hole that was dug by a rat' either denote the fall of the customary attitudes about inheritance as solely a matter of birthright, and place more emphasis on the expectation that the heirs must work hard for the inheritance. *Women and Law in Southern Africa* (1994) has documented some of the Basotho parents' sentiments about the heirs and inheritance:

It is unfair to make the first son an heir because they fail to discharge their responsibilities. An heir should be the child that feeds me, takes me to the doctor when I am sick and generally takes care of me and the family.

(Women & Law in Southern Africa, 1994, p.170)

Such change of attitudes amongst the Basotho regarding the heir and inheritance has opened room for other children who are not the first born boys to stand the chance to inherit their parents' property. This is a positive development, particularly if it does not get overwhelmed by the expectations that such heir

children should work for the inheritance to the extent that they do not attend school.

2.3.2 The Social Positioning of Girls in Lesotho

Within the traditional Basotho communities girls are differently constructed, and subservient ascriptions are imposed on them as opposed to boys. As such, girls within these communities do not enjoy much social status, and they are meant to remain in a subordinate position from birth and for the rest of their life. Contrary to how boys are constructed, there is no obvious attempt to accord differential social status (like an 'heir' in the case of boys) amongst girls. Girls are constructed as a homogeneous subordinate social group. The foundations and regulations for the construction of a girl child, the subservient ascriptions imposed on girls as well as the practices that girls are encouraged to engage in are deeply rooted in the legal deficit and social minority status of a girl child as expressed in the customary (Laws of Lerotholi, 1942) and the common laws of Lesotho. For instance, a girl child in Lesotho is first a minor who is dependent on her family from birth. She continues to bear a minority status when she gets married to be under the headship of her husband, and in the event of the husband dying, she bears the minority status under the headship of any close male relative in the family of her husband (proposed Married Persons Equality Bill, 2002⁵). In the event that she does not get married, a girl child bears the

⁵ After eight years since this Bill was first proposed, it has failed to pass through parliament. Reasons for this have included reluctance by most parliamentarians as the Bill is interpreted to

perpetual minority status under the headship of her male relatives in her family of birth.

This legal and social minority status of girls in Lesotho predisposes and makes them more susceptible to social ills such as rape and sexual violence. For instance, Chaka-Makhooane, Letuka, Majara, Matashane-Marite, Matela-Gwintsa, Morolong and Sakoane (2002) have identified young primary aged girls as particularly vulnerable to rape and sexual violence in Lesotho. The authors continue to illustrate how the construction of children as sexually innocent in general, and how the legal and social minority status of girls in particular impede girls who are sexually violated to report such incidents. In the event they report, it is difficult for the adult parents, police and court magistrates to believe what the young girls tell them about these incidents:

Age [is] a strong factor influencing inequality in the allocation of benefits such as honour and [respect] or denial of these to some groups [within the Basotho communities]....it has an influence on who is believed between a young person and an old one.

(Chaka-Makhooane et al., 2002, p.44)

This means that girls are silenced from reporting sexual violence instances or they are not listened to or believed in favour of an adult story concerning such cases. In the event an adult is involved in such cases his story is believed more than the story of a younger primary aged girl.

threaten the customs of the Basotho which give men decision-making power within the family and generally condone male dominance over females.

Within the Basotho communities the question of age is constructed and understood both in terms of the biological sense and the social sense (Women & Law in Southern Africa, 1998). The biological sense takes account of the number of years a child has from birth whereas the social sense accounts for the social status that is accorded to children either in terms of their birth order in the case of boys (see above) or in terms of whether they are boys or girls. The perpetual social minority status of girls under the headship of husbands or male relatives means boys are generally constructed or socialised to be older than girls, which is meant to allow for the headship that boys are expected to take over girls later in life. As such, even in the event of a sexually violent act by a boy against a girl, the social minority status of a girl and the influence of age on who is believed or not means that the case is likely to be pronounced in favour of a boy.

Within this context, it is clear that gender-based violence against girls forms an important part of girls' experiences within Basotho communities and schools (also see chapter 7). It is also clear that age (biological/social) and the social minority status of girls ensures that younger primary aged girls as opposed to boys/adult women and men are more susceptible to sexual violence. Yet it is not clear how the dynamics of this phenomenon play out in the context of FPE, how they affect the effective implementation of FPE and gender equality in the primary schools. The literature also falls short of explicating the active ways in which younger primary aged girls in Lesotho engage with issues of gender-based

violence, and learn from these engagements which might help improve gender equality in the primary schools and within the context of FPE.

The following section reviews the broad literature on the social perspectives of gender and schooling.

2.4 SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER AND SCHOOLING

Much of the literature on the social perspectives on gender is premised on the socially constructed nature of gender and gender relations (Bhana, 2002). Social perspectives on the construction of gender are drawn on to understand how social relations become incorporated within the gender rules and practices of individuals. Normally conducted through ethnographic methodologies, this literature provides rich descriptions of young people's lives in diverse social contexts, documenting the fluidity and multiple forms of gender identities. These studies also take into account the multiple meanings and functions of gendered social relations and their consequences (Bhana, 2002; Henderson, 1999). Through spending extensive time living or working in these communities, and developing close relationships between the researcher and the research participants, the researchers in these studies were able to explore in-depth manifestations of gender dynamics in social relations (Lee & Stanko, 2003).

Furthermore, recurring in these studies is a multi-dimensional definition of gender, and gender construction, which is inextricably connected with power and generates a more nuanced analysis than the narrower perspectives of gender as an explanatory variable which dominates the positivist literature (Parks, 2005). This multi-dimensional view of gender illuminates complex social processes in the construction, production/reproduction and regulation of gender. In this study, gender is seen not just as one of many variables but as central to the understanding of any social relations. I discuss these dimensions in some depth before considering their implications for the current study in chapter 7.

2.4.1 Schools as Sites for the Construction of Gender

Few studies in Lesotho focus on schools as sites for the construction of gender, and gendered social relations. For example, in a study which explored the underlying meaning, philosophy and orientation of patriarchy in Basotho culture and society, Molapo (2005) concluded that the issue of gender equality does not constitute much of any discourse in Lesotho – especially in the rural communities. As such Basotho people living in these communities are resigned to an awareness of gender inequality and gendered power-related conflicts. Their daily focus is primarily on the hardships of creating viable livelihood strategies in a country which is characterise d by massive unemployment and rural poverty.

In South Africa, Gultig and Hart (1990) and Unterhalter (1991) have explored schools as both reproducing the inequitable social order and generating change. The reproduction of gender inequalities, partly through hierarchical adult-child power relations, has been shown to produce unequal power relations amongst and between boys and girls. Morrell's work has also shown how gendered power relations are connected with school values and practices (Morrell, 1998; Morrell, 1992; Morrell, Unterhalter, Moletsane and Epstein 2002). For instance, his study of the colonial education system in Natal in the 19th and early 20th century showed how schools relied on corporal punishment to produce a rugged, tough masculinity, which was idealised and spread through colonial society (Morrell, 1994). Morrell traces connections between these practices and continuing authoritarian attitudes which in turn maintain an oppressive educational gender order (Morrell, 1998). In a study of corporal punishment and masculinity in Durban schools, he showed how masculinities expressed by learners rested on the idea that there are big differences between men and women, with men being harder and harsher than women, and on core values of masculinities including toughness, physicality and endurance. Gendered social relations then interacted with schooling practices in perpetuating unequal social relations amongst and between boys and girls, a finding which has been replicated in studies of masculinities outside the South African context (Connell, 1995; Mills, 2001).

Of particular relevance to this study is Bhana's ethnographic study of the production of gender in primary schools in Durban. Her study is unusual in its focus on younger primary aged children and its illustration of how early schooling is integral in the construction of gender identities and discourses (Bhana, 2002). Drawing on poststructural theory, Bhana argues that gendered identities are fluid and local, that power is made and remade in different times and contexts. She introduces the notion of 'momentary discourses' to account for the fleeting moments of power through which children construct their gendered identities, and which are also generative of change and agency. This denotes the active part that primary aged children play in the construction of gender and the instability/fluidity of power relations, as well as how this state of affairs gives way to the contestation and subversion of dominant gender norms.

By and large, the research discussed in this section denotes how schools are implicated in the production/reproduction of gender inequalities. However, these studies also view schools as part of the processes of change. Bhana (2002) writes of the need for the education system to provide spaces where gender identities can be made and remade to move beyond the negative constraints gender can impose. Morrell sees the banning of physical punishment as having the potential to permit gentler masculinities and more consultative forms of discipline (Morrell, 2001b). For example, a study evaluating a gender and HIV intervention found that school's access to social capital, a language of gender

and good management, all contributed to the success of interventions (Moletsane, Morrell, Unterhalter & Epstein, 2002). This denotes how school climates are crucial for the success of interventions such as FPE which aim to improve gender equality in the schools. But the role of children in the construction of gender within the primary schools is often under-researched (Renold, 2005), a gap this study aims to contribute towards addressing.

2.4.2 Children as Active Agents in the Construction of Gender

As Renold (2003) notes, much of the writing on gender construction has centered upon the production of 'teenage' boys and girls within the secondary school arenas (see also Mac an Ghaill, 1994) or young men within further and higher education institutions (Haywood & Mac Ghaill, 2003). With the exception of the few studies cited above, not much research has yet addressed the diversity and ambiguities surrounding younger primary aged boys and girls with regards to how they actively construct gender. Few studies which focus on younger primary aged children explore gender construction beyond a discussion of sexual difference and sexual abuse or deviance (Skelton, 2001). In many of these studies the active aspects through which children take part in the construction of gender is not expressly acknowledged. In Lesotho, for instance, barely any data exist on how Basotho children exercise agency to inventively and actively negotiate, contest and construct gender, particularly in the primary schools. This is partly because the agency and active role which children can play to determine

their lives, and in the development of their country is not yet expressly acknowledged in Lesotho.

However, some scholars (Bhana, 2002; Mac an Ghaill, 1996) purport that boys and girls actively construct gender by either adhering to or subverting the hegemonic masculine and feminine ways of performing gender (Butler, 1990). Renold (2003) claims that in order to address the diversity and ambiguities in how children actively construct gender, we need to extend our understanding of gender construction from sexual activity, to a wide range of discourses and performances, through which boys and girls define, negotiate and essentially construct their gendered selves. In this regard, Connell (1995) has shown how primary aged boys construct hegemonic masculine performances in ways that illustrate that hegemonic masculine discourses and performances are inextricably tied to dominant notions of heterosexuality. It is claimed that problematising and interrogating the 'heterosexual presumption' in the ways through which boys and girls construct gender will make visible its 'normalization' and subsequent dominance (Connell, 1995) over other forms of masculinities, including femininities. I expand on this in the following subsection to illustrate the role of heterosexuality in how children (boys and girls) actively construct gender.

2.4.2.1 Heterosexuality and gender construction in the primary schools

Renold (2004) asserts that according to commonsense understandings, young children are (sexually) innocent. They neither do, nor should they, know anything

about sexuality. The fear is that contemporary children 'grow up too soon' or are 'not yet ready' for sexual knowledge (Epstein & Telford, 2003). These contentions are set against a growing recognition that primary schools are far from asexual environments and that primary school children cannot be presumed (sexually) innocent (Davies, 1991; Thorne, 1993; Skelton, 2001). Renold's argument implies that 'sexuality (especially heterosexuality) is not only present but crucial to the organisation of primary schools, and features prominently in the processes through which young children construct gender (2004). Her study illustrates how young children's (hetero) sexual cultures are an important aspect in how they construct gender, and how the organizational heteronormativity of the primary school provides a matrix on which boys and girls construct gender. She also shows how in particular hegemonic masculinities and femininities involve a 'heterosexual presumption' of gendered children. In other words, she illustrates how being a 'proper boy/girl' involves establishing or at least investing in and projecting a recognisable (and hegemonic) heterosexual gendered identity.

Renold (2005) suggests that, in most cases, boys and girls are to some extent subjected to the pressures of 'compulsory heterosexuality', which is evident in the boyfriend/girlfriend cultures of the school, and even if they were not directly engaged in, are forever positioned in relation to it. She also purports that boys are usually confused, anxious, and powerless because of the contradictions involved in constructing heterosexualised masculinities through boyfriend or

girlfriend discourses (for instance, in cases where intimacy with girls could be simultaneously contaminating and masculinity confirming). Renold (2003) argues that the majority of boys come to define and produce their heterosexualities through various public projections of heterosexual fantasies, imagined heterosexual futures, misogynistic objectifications of girls and women, homophobic/anti-gay performances towards boys and sexualised forms of harassment towards girls. These factors permeate and thus ultimately affect in a negative manner, everyday classroom and playground interactions amongst and between boys and girls, and as such become a significant site for children's active contestation, negotiation and construction of gender.

Butler (1997) accedes that the most disturbing factor in this regard is how children (girls and boys) actively regulate gendered interactions through the policing and shaming of gender constructions/performances which do not automatically signify hegemonic masculinities/femininities. In these cases, such constructions or performances of gender have real social and emotional consequences which are damaging for both boys and girls. For example, homophobic/anti-gay performances do not only have the effect of subordinating alternative masculinities and non-hegemonic sexual/gender identities, but implicitly subordinate femininities and all things 'feminine' (majority of girls/girl's activities).

However, in a moral and political climate where children's construction of gender is a contested and contentious space, schools are legitimately anxious about the reactions of some parents and worse, the popular press if they stray into territory considered to be too risky (Epstein & Telford, 2003). This includes instances where teachers officially encourage and support gender constructions and/or performances which are not valued in a particular moral and political climate, such as being gay or lesbian. School principals and teachers are thus placed in a difficult position to openly discuss children's emerging gender and sexual identities and 'knowledges' in ways that can challenge the more prevailing heteronormativity of boys' and girls' peer group cultures, and indeed, draw upon the services or formulate the policies needed to support children's more painful and oppressive practices of gender-based and sexualised forms of harassment.

2.4.3 Power and Gender in Social Relations

Studies which view gender from a social perspective generally believe that gender is concerned with social power relations which are metaphorically or literally androcentric. In this study, gender is viewed as socially constructed, a process which is inescapably invested with power, but also a process that we do or perform (Butler, 1990). Gender arrangements are reproduced by social relations which constrain, but do not fix, individual action and identity. Gender identities are thus multiple and fluid: "a lived set of embodied potentialities" (McNay, 2000, p.25), and this fluidity is the source of agency and change. There are multiple ways of 'doing' womanhood and manhood or girlhood and boyhood,

diverse masculinities and femininities: “inflecting or inflected by all the other dimensions of someone’s social identity – their age, ethnicity, class, occupation and so forth” (Cameron, 2004, p.3). Therefore, gender identities are constructed not just in contrast to the opposite gender, but by contrast with other versions of the same gender.

In a study on children and violence in Cape Town, Parks (2005) found that African masculinities enabled men to dominate public space and decision-making, to have unquestioned dominance over women and to demand respect from young people. Morrell (1994) and Unterhalter (2000) found that within African communities a high value was/is placed on ‘heroic masculinities’ – with their qualities of adventure, danger, daring and loyalty, and autonomy. Male hegemony cuts across boundaries of race and class. Just as in the case of language usage and traditional circumcision within the Basotho communities discussed in the previous chapter, within the family, patriarchy and the role of tradition were/are often non-negotiable (Ramphela & Boonzaier, 1988). The power of the social expectations attached to these forms of masculinities inscribes anxiety amongst boys and men, especially in circumstances where these could not be genuinely attained. Field (2001) reflects on the inevitability of being unable to attain some of these mythical subject positions:

It is precisely the mythical, totally masculine, heroic figurethat helps [boys and] men to negotiate their uncomfortable emotions and oppressive social contexts.....However, these mythical roles and nostalgic stories [are] only partly self-sustaining for the [boys and] men, and in the process an emotional cost [is]

incurred. The cost of unresolved feelings and unacknowledged needs means that for all the success of their social....lives, [boys and] men remain disappointed.

(Field, 2001, p. 222)

The power of the androcentric values within such institutions as primary schools, and the unattainability of these masculinities, have led Field (2001, p.224) to conceptualise all gendered social identities as “masculine myths”. A related notion of the fantasies of male identity and power propelled Moore to theorise interpersonal gendered violence, which in most cases is a symbol of asymmetrical power relations amongst and between boys and girls, and /or men and women, as stemming from the thwarting that occurs when people are unable to take up the subject positions generated in the fantasies of masculinity (Moore, 1994).

What is clear in all these studies is that constructions of certain forms of masculinities and femininities as inherently attached to certain individuals (boys for masculinities and girls for femininities) is a functional source of degraded gendered social relations. The strivings to take up some of the mostly unattainable forms of identities because one is male or female is thus the source of the breakdown of gender relations. In the main these studies show how gendered social identities are both situated within contexts, and generate conflicts within and between various social identities. The studies focus particularly on relationships between men and women, but they rarely explore gendered social identities of young children, particularly within schools.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The chapter reviewed the literature on the broad debates about FPE and gender equality in education as well as the challenges for the implementation of FPE in Africa and beyond. The literature on the broader debates about FPE and gender equality in education emphasise s the centrality of gender equality as a critical aspiration for which FPE has been implemented in the primary schools across different countries. This review has also identified the provision of adequate resources, elimination of gender stereotypes in the FPE school curriculum, HIV and AIDS, poverty and some cultural practices, and the adaptation of FPE to suit the local contexts of the schools as the main challenges facing the implementation of FPE, as well as the improvement of gender equality in the primary schools. I have argued that much of the literature on FPE debates and on challenges for the implementation of FPE does not take account of the everyday lived experiences of the parents, teachers and children in locally situated context such as the primary schools. This study seeks to address this discrepancy.

The review of the literature on culture and the social construction of children within the Basotho communities illustrated how power and social status is differently accorded to boys based on their birth order and thereby inscribing asymmetrical expectations, roles and social positioning on fellow brothers. The literature has also described how boys and girls are constructed differently and

the resultant low social positioning and power status to which such constructions relegate girls. I have contended that the ascription of social and power status to children according to their gender (boys or girls) and their birth order (in the case of boys) serves to reproduce asymmetrical power relations between girls and boys, and amongst fellow bothers (boys). This does not work to the advancement of gender equality as these patterns of relationships might impact on, and manifest themselves amongst children in the primary schools within the context of FPE.

The literature on the social perspectives of gender and schooling offer more nuanced understandings of gender construction, as having multiple meanings and as embedded within historical and social relationships. According to this literature, gender construction is seen as a social interaction which has multiple meanings. The interpretation of meanings is central to how gender is understood and acted upon by those engaged in the processes of constructing and negotiating gender relations, including primary school children, and the researcher. Meanings are socially constructed, with local meanings rooted in the past and reproduced through discourse (Parks, 2005, p.40). The gendered social identities are constructed within the spaces in the cultural/societal context, school and family. And the degraded gender relations within these institutions come about when boys (and men) in particular are unable to take up the subject positions generated in the fantasies of masculinity (Moore, 1994).

These studies paint a rich picture of how gender is constructed in/through social relations, but my questions still remain. Most of the studies I have discussed have involved adults and yet it is at a childhood age that our beliefs, values and practices are formed and crystallised, and so research whose main participants are younger primary aged children could have immense value in illuminating these gendered social processes. In Lesotho, in particular, the literature on Basotho culture and the construction of gender, for instance, pays little attention to the active role which children take in the construction of gender.

Research is then needed to explore the multiple meanings with which parents, teachers and children construct gender, using a social constructionist epistemology – a theoretical framework which interprets these meanings within the network of social relations (see Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of the theoretical frameworks of the study). Some of the studies, especially Bhana's (2002) ethnography, Renold's (2005), Thorne's (1993), and Skelton's (2001) work, begin to address these questions, even though most of these studies are based on the Western context. My interest is to understand how processes of the constructions of gender play out in Lesotho primary schools, and within the context of FPE – a context which none of these writers have addressed.

CHAPTER 3

PARADIGMS IN GENDER RESEARCH: THEORETICAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on parents', teachers' and children's constructions of gender, and the ways in which such constructions might help illuminate how we could address gender inequality in the primary schools. This aim can be interpreted to advance a 'feminist agenda'. A 'feminist agenda' is generally associated with the emancipation or liberation of women and girls, the establishment of equal rights and opportunities for girls and women with their male counterparts (boys and men) and opposition to various forms of male dominance. Feminism has, however, never been a united or homogeneous movement (cf. de Jong, 1992, pp.125–127). As such, the term 'feminism' embraces a variety of movements and ideologies concerned with the advancement of the above-mentioned feminist agenda. For instance, orthodoxies such as Classical Marxism, socialism, liberalism, black feminism, and radical feminism have all proposed specific answers to reasons for existing inequality between men and women and boys and girls.

These orthodoxies can be grouped together since they are all based on the structuralist perspective of gender. The structuralist perspective of gender acknowledges the existence of one single, constant principle which is used to understand gender inequality in a society. According to this analysis, for instance, certain structural elements (such as race, capitalism, biology or culture) are regarded as inevitable to understand gender issues like patriarchy. The sternest criticism against these orthodoxies is that each one of them tries to legitimise their one (monolithic) kind of knowledge to propose specific answers to reasons for existing gender inequality in our society. In the process, they invariably end up excluding other forms of knowledge that can help understand the dynamics involved in the processes of the construction of gender and the state/nature of gender in/equality, particularly in the primary schools.

However, these orthodoxies provide a powerful basis upon which contemporary gender theorization is premised. For instance, modern gender theories, such as discursive and materialist theories (see below) invariably revert to some of these orthodoxies to explain dynamics in the social construction of gender. My intention in this study is not to provide exhaustive discussions of these orthodoxies as they are fairly well known in feminist circles. Instead the chapter introduces the social constructionist paradigm⁶ (Gergen, 1999; Burr, 1995) as the guiding theoretical framework of the study. This refers to a knowledge perspective which regards the

⁶ Paradigms are characterised by the way their proponents respond to ontological, epistemological and methodological questions (Guba, 1990) and to other issues like, the aim of the research and the values of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). In chapter 4 I discuss how my life experiences (ontology) connect me to the social constructionist paradigm as well as the theories and methodologies I have employed in this study.

socially constructedness nature, multiplicity and fluidity of gender meanings and constructions. It recognises the plurality of voices and the concomitant acknowledgement of uncertainties, which awaken the awareness that different interpretations are possible (Gergen, 2001; Parker, 2005). The study employed the social constructionist paradigm because of the understanding that in this world of continuously changing historical, social and institutional events, the establishment of any constant cultural, biological or structural principle is simply not possible. Consequently, any single frame of reference in respect of how parents, teachers and children construct gender and around issues of in/equality in the primary schools is limited.

The social constructionist paradigm regards participants (parents, teachers and children) as active social beings, who actively and through social relationships, engage with issues of gender. As such, the chapter discusses, particularly children as active social beings in the construction of gender. It also regards power and agency as critical factors for maintaining and changing unequal gender relations in the primary schools. The chapter therefore, briefly discusses gender, power and agency and considers the possibilities for continuity and change in gender inequality in the primary schools, and within the context of FPE.

Guided by the social constructionist paradigm, to describe and analyse the construction of gender and gender in/equality in the three participating schools,

this study utilises theories on the social construction of gender. In this regard, the chapter discusses discursive and materialist theories as the two main theoretical approaches in the debates around the social construction of gender, and briefly highlights the implications of these debates for the construction of gender and gender in/equality in the primary schools. These theories differ in their emphasis on 'words' (discursive) and 'things' (materialist) but they both agree on the socially constructed nature of gender, and gender in/equality in various contexts, including primary schools.

Overall, in this study I synthesise these approaches from social psychology and sociology, which both share a social orientation to the study of people, but differ in their attention to adults and children, to intimate or broader social relations and power networks, and to agency and change. Through this synthesis, my intention is to unravel some of the processes through which parents, teachers, and children construct, co-construct and re-construct beliefs and practices in relation to gender. My intention is also to learn from these participants not just how gender inequality is produced and reproduced, but how we might attempt to change unequal gender relations in the primary schools.

3.2 THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST PARADIGM

The study is located within the social constructionist paradigm. This was chosen because of its potential to illuminate multiple and rich ways through which gender is constructed in/through social relations. At the core of the social constructionist

paradigm is the view that our ways of seeing the world are generated by relations rather than by external realities (Gergen, 1999). This does not mean that there are no external realities, but that what is important in the study of humans is how we perceive and make sense of the world around us and it is our socially and historically constituted relations that determine this:

[The] social constructionist [paradigm] doesn't try to rule on what is or is not fundamentally real. Whatever is, simply is. However, the moment we begin to articulate what there is – what is truly or objectively the case – we enter a world of discourse – and thus a tradition, a way of life and a set of value preferences.

(Gergen, 1999, p.222)

Rather than seeking facts and truths, the social constructionist paradigm is interested in discourse, or those historically constituted repertoires, systems of social relationships, belief or 'knowledges', which we normally take for granted as if they were fact and which construct our gendered social identities (Burr, 1995):

Our [gender] identity therefore originates not from inside the person, but from the social realm, where people swim in a sea of language and other signs, a sea that is invisible to us because it is the very medium of our existence as social beings. In this sense the realm of language, signs and discourse is to the person as water is to the fish.

(Burr, 1995, p.53)

This means that in order to understand how parents, teachers and children construct gender, analysis must focus on the social realms within which these participants are situated. Within these realms there are systems of beliefs and relationships that constitute inequitable gender relations and categories, which these participants use to understand themselves and others. As such, this study analysed the systems of beliefs with regards to gender and gendered social

relationships in three primary schools within the context of FPE. It explored how the taken-for-granted discourses and practices of gender through which parents, teachers and children construct themselves play role in the production and reproduction of gender inequality in these primary schools.

Reason (1998) and Mullender, Hague, Imam, Kelly, Malos and Regan (2002) have, however, criticised the emphasis on discourse for its potential slide into relativism and the apparent denial of the 'realities' of social inequalities such as sexism and racism. The social constructionist paradigm does not deny these realities. Instead it challenges taken-for-granted meanings about these realities, and thus views them as socially situated (Gergen, 1999). For example, the social constructionist paradigm does not deny the socially constructed categories allocated to males (boys and men) and females (girls and women) in our society and the concomitant gender inequality that arises from this categorization. Yet it challenges the taken-for-granted meanings attached to these socially constructed realities as if they were fact, static and inevitable. It does not prohibit taking a political standpoint or position, but entails recognition that this is a position and that there are other positions. Since positions are mobile, the social constructionist paradigm also anticipates greater potential for change than rigidly structuralist perspectives:

For many people this supposition is deeply threatening, for it suggests there is nothing we can hold onto, nothing solid on which we can rest our beliefs, nothing secure. Yet, for others this dark night of insecurity gives way to an enormous sense of liberation. In daily life, so many of our categories of understanding – of age, gender, race, intelligence, emotion, reason and the like – seem to create untold suffering. And in the world more generally, so many common understandings –religion, nationality, ethnicity, economics and the like –seem to

generate conflict, alienation, injustice, and even genocide. From the [social] constructionist standpoint we are not locked within any convention of understanding.

(Gergen, 1999, pp.47-48)

In studying how parents, teachers and children construct gender, the social constructionist paradigm can be highly discomfoting for the researcher. For example, it challenges me, as the researcher, to examine my own assumptions about gender, to question my 'instinctive' views that gender inequality is necessarily detrimental and that women and girl children should be protected against such inequality. In this perspective, I am forced to even consider whether and how gender inequality in the schools might be productive. However, this study is grounded on the belief that gender inequality compromises the quality of life experiences for girls and boys, and therefore, aims to find ways of improving gender equality in the primary schools. Hence the study does not attempt to find ways in which gender inequality might be productive in the primary schools.

The social constructionist paradigm also challenges my temptation to position myself as a 'voice' for the participants of this study, empowering them through representing their views about gender. It urges me instead to consider how parents', teachers' and children's views are situated within social webs, to understand that these participants' perspectives, like my own, are constructed in and through relationships, past, present and anticipated. My task is to try to make sense of these complex relationships.

The social constructionist paradigm attempts to make sense of gender relationships through the analysis of patterns of communication. Thus, in this study the methodological focus is on parents', teachers' and children's discourses and performances of gender. These discourses and performances are viewed as selective, partial, situated and fluid (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). For instance, when I ask a child about gender in the primary school, her response may be influenced by her relationship with me, a (male) adult, and may be quite different from her response to her friend or her teacher. She may be thinking of the roles of her mother and her father at home, or the conversation she overheard between her sister and her brother about washing the dishes after dinner. Parents' (mothers and fathers) and teachers' views will be influenced by their own life experiences, but all perspectives of the participants in this study will be connected with their social identities as males or females, black, working class or poor and young or old. And if these previous interactions have influenced the perspectives and practices that parents, teachers and children have now, then what about this present interaction – of these participants and me as researcher? What impact might it have on the future, and on gender in/equality in the primary schools?

The social constructionist paradigm views not only parents and teachers, but also children as active social agents, who creatively and inventively take active roles in the construction of gender. As such, the following subsection discusses conceptualisations of children as active social beings.

3.2.1 Children as Active Social Beings

This study focuses on parents', teachers' and children's constructions of gender, and on how children in particular, actively perform gender in their everyday schooling encounters. It considers the contradictions and complexities in parents', teachers' and children's perspectives. It regards these participants as intricately enmeshed within a web of social relations, and explores how gender is constructed within this web, how it coerces, negotiates, reinforces and shifts these social relations and in particular how children actively engage with these processes.

Understanding the social contours of gender is central to this thesis, but the notion of children 'enmeshed within a web of social relationships' seems to offer little room for agency and change. That is, the view that children are intricately entangled in the social relations within their communities (Burr, 1995; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) makes it less likely that they might construct gender in ways that challenge and subvert these relations. Indeed, the vast body of literature on children and gender awards children little control or power in relation to how they actively construct and determine their gendered identities. Children are normally conceptualised as passive victims of the processes of gender socialisation (Renold, 2005).

I chose the term 'construction' of gender for the title of this thesis to present a more generative conceptualisation of children as active, creative beings who 'do' construct their ways of engaging with the world through social relationships. This conceptualisation draws on the ideas of developmental psychology, which, influenced by the work of Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner, has shifted in recent years from a view of the child as an active, but isolated agent to an emphasis on the child as an active social being:

We have come to appreciate that through such social life, the child acquires a framework for interpreting experience, and learns how to negotiate in a manner congruent with requirements of culture. Making sense is a social process; it is an activity situated within [a] cultural and historical context.

(Bruner & Haste, 1987, p.1)

This strand of developmental psychology, known as interpretive or constructionist, has led to an emphasis on how children construct meaning within social context. It also illustrates how these meanings are dependent upon the available repertoire of belief systems or discourses, within a culture, so babies: "come bathed in the concepts their community holds about babies just as surely as they come bathed in amniotic fluid" (Cole, 1996, p.184). Therefore, this thesis views constructions of gender and development as reciprocal processes, with the child acting in relation to her social network.

The analytic focus arising from this in recent developmental psychology is the learning relationship – that of the pre-school child and parent or sibling within the home (Dunn & Munn, 1987; Bruner, 1990) or the teacher, child and activity or practice within school (Cole, 1996), or the child and cultural practices (Goodnow,

Miller & Kessel, 1995; Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacasa & Goldsmith, 1995). This perspective emphasises the processes of meaning formation and the ways in which by internal contradictions and transformations, first social and then individual children make meaning of the world. Such notions have informed recent pedagogical imperatives on teaching as a social process - emphasising teaching and learning through participation, collaboration and negotiation.

These ideas are employed in this study to help identify processes through which children in particular construct meanings of gender within and through social relationships. Drawing on interpretive research methods, I chose to focus on the fine-grained analysis of gender discourses and performances within three primary schools. The study also considered how conversations and interactions between children in various groups, with teachers and with me, as researcher, have contributed to the co-creating of gender meanings and performances. But there are limitations to the value of these approaches in this study. Kenneth Gergen (2001, p.124) has criticised the “incoherence of the logic in Constructionist approaches which acknowledge the social construction of meaning formation yet continue to subscribe to a dualist ontology that separates the internal mind and the external world”.

With gender deeply embedded in social relationships, this study addresses the above limitation by focusing on the social relationships and the “configurations of power and control” which generate/challenge gender inequality, and which are

frequently neglected in developmental research (Daniels, 2001, p.63). Power and agency are critical for the sustaining and changing of beliefs and practices about gender. Therefore, this study considers how power is exercised in the construction of gender. The social constructionist paradigm is also concerned with how power is exercised to change, challenge and maintain beliefs and practices about gender. The following subsection addresses this.

3.2.2 Gender, Power and Agency

For its particular emphasis on discourse as fundamental means through which we express our constructions and interpretations of gender, the social constructionist paradigm pays attention to how discourse is not just enabling, but also constraining (Parker, 1998). It also pays attention to how some discourses of gender come to dominate, and how they are appropriated by powerful groups and converted into 'knowledges' which constrain and subjugate less powerful people. The work of Michel Foucault on the relationship between knowledge and power shows how power is exercised through common knowledge and discourses, which function in a disciplinary (constraining) way to produce 'docile bodies'. This work also illustrates how the identities of dominant groups are maintained through the denigration and exclusion of marginal groups (Foucault, 1978). In Lesotho, for example, the appropriation of masculine and feminine behaviour through cultural traditions such as circumcision and language usages (Molapo, 2005) is a tool to enforce women's and girl children's subjugation. This ensures unequal power relations, for instance, amongst and between men and

women, boys and girls, which breed gender inequality (see subsection 3.3.1 below for further discussion on discourses).

Within social psychology, these ideas, derived from Foucault, have been used to analyse how beliefs, subjectivities and practices are connected with material relations (Levett, Kottler, Walaza, Mabena, Leon & Ngqakayi-Motaung, 1997). As such, they have been used in this study to analyse how gender attitudes, subjectivities and practices within Lesotho primary schools can be deconstructed, or traced back to the historical conflicts and social relationships of gender inequalities. Discourse analysis has been used to analyse how social relations construct our ways of talking and behaviour, and how talk is constructive, how we are positioned by discourse (Wetherell, 1998; Wenger, 1998). Though much of this work is focused on the world of adults, rather than children, these ideas and the methods they have spawned have been valuable in this study as tools for systematic analysis of parents', teachers' and children's discourses and performances of gender.

Poststructuralist analyses, and particularly the work of Judith Butler (1990), have highlighted the instability of gendered discourses or norms, which are constructed through regulatory practices in opposition to an excluded other and thus are inherently unstable. In order to make these discourses appear natural, they must be frequently repeated or performed, reinscribed on to bodies, thereby reproducing social orders (Butler, 1999). According to this analysis change of the

existing gender inequalities in the primary schools happens at the margins - through actions that disrupt and displace dominant gender norms (Butler, 1993). As also observed by Thorne (1993) and Benjamin (2002), this approach has shown powerfully how in the primary school playgrounds children adopt and perform particular gendered subject positions, which perpetuate or challenge inequitable relations amongst and between boys and girls. In researching parents, teachers and children and gender, Butler's work helps to identify ways in which these participants' engagements with gendered practices can reproduce power relations – amongst and between girls and boys, children and adults – while clarifying how those power relations are unstable and contested.

However, poststructuralist theories offer a negative and uni-directional understanding of subject formation, since they view subjectivity as discursively and symbolically constructed and thus render the subject as essentially passive (McNay, 2000). McNay suggests that the work of Bourdieu offers a more 'generative' paradigm, which takes into account not just the way disciplinary effects are deposited in the body, but how the living through or 'praxis' of these embodied norms offers some space for agency. This is a more reciprocal way of viewing the relationship between subjectivity and social relations or what Bourdieu and Wacquant call 'habitus' or 'field':

A field consists of a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital), while habitus consists of a set of historical relations 'deposited' within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal , appreciation, and action.

(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.16)

According to Bourdieu, social relations operate within multiple fields – political, economic, artistic, religious and so forth – in which agents struggle, either to preserve the field's boundaries or to change its form. Through using a game metaphor, Bourdieu illustrates how field, like games, operates through rules and regularities, with players colluding with the rules of the game, and having access to varying amounts and types of 'tokens' or capital (economic, intellectual, political and so on) with which to compete (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.16). Success in the game is connected then with access to forms of capital within the particular field. 'Habitus' describes the dispositions or ways of being which embody the social structures within which it is created:

Social realities exist, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside of agents. And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is a product, it is like a 'fish in water'; it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about it for granted.

(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.127)

The 'fish-in-water' metaphor I used earlier in a quote from Burr (Burr, 1995, p.53) reflects the embeddedness of humans in the social world and it also overlaps with Foucault's notion of 'docile body'. Both these notions reflect how people are intricately entangled in the discourses and practices within their communities such that they tend not to reflect critically on what is happening in these communities. This emphasises how it is not easy for people to deviate from the gender biased values that their communities hold about the world, including the socially inscribed gender inequality in the primary schools. This study sought to contribute to strategies of ensuring that gender equitable discourses and practices become part of the belief systems within the primary schools, and thus

making it difficult for primary schooling to affirm discourses and practices that promote gender inequality.

But for Bourdieu, habitus also provides a space for improvisation. Habitus can be used creatively and inventively and is “a strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.132). With the proliferation of social fields in contemporary societies (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999) and the resultant potential for conflict and dissonance in the habitus, there is also potential for change - “individuals may respond in unanticipated and innovative ways which may hinder, reinforce or catalyse social change” (McNay, 2000, p.5). From this conceptualisation we learn that it should not be taken for granted that parents, teachers and children would necessarily construct gender in conformity to the dominant (and inequitable) constructions of gender in their communities and schools. This study sought to unveil the ways in which these participants innovatively respond to the dominant constructions of gender, and actively construct gender in ways that catalyse change for gender equality in the primary schools.

Studies using these ideas (see Bullen & Kenway, 2005; McLeod, 2005; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999) identified ways in which the changing patterns of contemporary society multiply sites of potential change, but also sites of suffering, subordination and continuities in gender inequality. In studying parents', teachers' and children's constructions of gender, Bourdieu's ideas and

their feminist interpretations (for instance, by Lois McNay, 2000) facilitate an understanding of how gendered social relations can become incorporated within, for instance, children's beliefs and practices – or habitus. These ideas illustrate how there may be conflict in the habitus generated by different social fields, in the classroom or playground, the home and so forth. Such conflicts can result in change or in the reproduction of gender inequality; they may enable children to resist and contest discourses and practices that reproduce gender inequality.

Yet within the context of Lesotho where there are many institutions which work to reproduce gender inequality (see Chapter 1), children may have limited possibilities for agency and choices in how to engage with discourses and practices that reproduce gender inequality. Instead there may be decreased possibilities, as Bourdieu argues, for “positional suffering” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999, p.4), or lesser awareness of their low standing in relation to others. This study aimed to raise awareness of the inequitable social positioning that gender inequality in the primary schools invariably accords to girls and boys. It also aimed to provide strategies through which to harness discourses and practices that individual parents, teachers, girls and boys use to catalyse social change that promotes gender equality in the primary schools within the context of FPE.

Guided by the social constructionist paradigm, this study utilises theories on the social construction of gender. As such, the following section discusses discursive

and materialist theories so as to illuminate further the dynamics involved in the construction of gender and gender in/equality in the three participating schools.

3.3 THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER

Theories that subscribe to the social construction of gender help us to understand how gender is shaped and given meaning by the social structures of, and the social relations/interactions in, a society (Alsop, Fitzsimons & Lennon, 2002). Such theories can be (crudely) divided into two main categories. First, are those termed the 'discursive theorists' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Foucault, 1978). These place emphasis on the meanings which are attached to being male or female within society, stressing the role of language and culture (Barrett, 1992). Second, are broadly 'materialist theorists' (for instance, Hennessy, 1993; Modo and Ogbu, 1998) that stress the structural features of the social world that ensure that women and men, girls and boys are fitted into distinctive pathways within the society. These theorists emphasise concrete social relations, of work, family, sexuality and so forth (Hartman, 1982).

This study is premised on the assumption that both categories of features of the social world (discursive and materialist) are central to processes of the construction of gender. These theories are used in this study to analyse how the different meanings that individual parents, teachers and girls and boys construct and attach to being a boy or a girl might offer space for challenging and subverting gender norms that instil gender inequality in the primary schools. The

theories are also used to help unveil how social relationships and categories allocated to boys and girls perpetuate gender inequality. The study also sought to find out what we can learn from these social relationships and categories that might help address gender inequality in primary schools.

3.3.1 Discursive Theories of Gender

Discursive theorists (such as Foucault, 1986; Weedon, 1999; Wetherell, 1998) are characterised by their understanding of gender as a structure of subjectivity, which can vary greatly in different social locations. According to this analysis the construction of gender is seen as a process rather than a 'role' (Barrett, 1992). Culture and language are central to the processes of the construction of gender. Viewing the construction of gender as a process allows for the exploration of how meaning is constantly being reproduced and negotiated and can have contradictory and unexpected effects (Alsop, Fitzsimons & Lennon, 2002). This analysis provides a framework for understanding social change and the way in which, for instance, individual girls and boys in the primary schools, through these processes of negotiation with meaning, constitute their world. It also illustrates how they challenge and subvert dominant forces (be they materialist or discursive) that instil gender inequality (Wetherell, 1998), particularly within the context of FPE.

The work of Foucault (1986) has been particularly useful, especially in its introduction of the term 'discourse' as a critical variable in the processes of the

construction of gender. According to Gee (1992, 1996) Discourses⁷ are socially organised ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, and speaking. These 'ways' enable us to be identified and recognised as being a member of a particular social group. They are acquired by enculturation ("apprenticeship") into social practices through interaction with people who have already acquired knowledge of the relevant discourse (Bharuthram, 2006, p.35). Wenger (1998) makes reference to 'communities of practice' within which Gee's (1996) notion of discourse can be articulated:

Communities of practice is a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do...it includes the language,... documents, images, well-defined roles, specified criteria, codified procedure that various practices make explicit for a variety of purposes. But it also includes all the implicit relations, tacit conversations, subtle cues, untold rules of the thumb, recognizable institutions....and shared world views.

(Wenger, 1998, p.4)

For Foucault, discourses are anything that carries meaning – language, images, stories, cultural products and so forth. Customs and social practices like giving away the bride in marriage, as is the case within the Basotho communities, segregating work according to gender, all carry meaning and thus such practices are Discourses. In order to denote the all encompassing meaning of a Discourse as all things that constitute meaning, Scott (1988) argued that:

A discourse is not a language or a text, but a historically, socially and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories and beliefs.

(Scott, 1988, pp.35 – 36)

⁷ Discourses are spelt with a capital (D). Gee (1990, p.142) uses discourses with a small (d) for connected stretches of language that make sense like, conversations, stories, reports, arguments, and essays. He argues that 'discourse' is always part of 'Discourse' and that 'Discourse' with a big 'D' is always more than just language. In thesis I use capital (D) in the same understanding as Gee. I also use small (d) to refer to means of communication that carry meanings in relation to gender.

Discourses are constructive and are a form of social action: “Discourse builds objects, worlds, minds and social relations, it doesn’t just reflect them” (Wetherell, 1998, p.16). As discussed in the previous section, our gender identities and performances thereof are to a large extent informed by gender Discourses in our specific contexts. As parents, teachers and children talk about gendered social relations they co-create ways of engaging with gender. An analysis of their gender discourses can tell us not just their opinions, but where those opinions come from, how they are constructed through social relations, how they are repeated, patterned and how they are changed. Through focusing on patterns and variability in Discourses of gender, analysis can illuminate processes whereby beliefs and practices about gender are constructed and changed.

As such, Discourses shape the way people view the world and are therefore not just a mere reflection of an already ordered reality. Instead, they are that with which reality is ordered – they are a means by which gender differences, for example between girls and boys, become produced (Foucault, 1978). Primary schooling in Lesotho and within the context of FPE is organised around certain Discourses. The meanings that parents, teachers, girls and boys attach to practices such as wearing of the school uniforms (dresses for girls and trousers for boys), segregated male and female toilets, different chores allocated to girls and boys, different sporting activities and fields for boys and girls, all form powerful ‘discursive constructs’ (also see chapter 7) through which these

participants define themselves and construct gender. The meanings attached to these issues/practices do not only constitute a means by which girls and boys in these primary schools understand themselves and the world, but also a means by which gender inequality is produced/reproduced.

Closely related is Foucault's notion of 'subjectification' in the processes of the construction of gender. This refers to the processes by which subjects (for instance, girls and boys) construct gender by disciplining their bodies and behaviour in accordance with the gender norms explicit/implicit in the Discourses in terms of which their subjectivity is constituted (Alsop, Fitzsimons & Lennon, 2002, p.87). Foucault's notion of 'subjectification' has been useful to enable the study to make sense of girls' and boys' attempts and failures to produce their bodies, and generally construct gender in accordance with the local norms of desirable masculinity and femininity. The failures have been interpreted in this study as a means by which boys and girls intentionally or otherwise challenge and subvert the existing gender norms. The study contends that in so doing, they construct alternative ways of being girls and boys which might have positive effects for gender equality in the primary schools.

Furthermore, Discourses can vary in meaning according to the context and can even be used in reverse ways in different situations. In Foucault's own words, "[D]iscourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (1978, p.101).

For instance, as Lois McNay points out, “the massive proliferation of Discourses on deviant” gender norms in the contemporary society “serves to reinforce traditional/dominant gender norms. Yet this very multiplicity creates reverse [D]iscourses used by those labelled as deviant to establish their own gender identity (McNay, 2000, p.39). The objective of improving gender equality in Lesotho primary schools through the implementation of FPE may proliferate Discourses which challenge gender inequality between and amongst the girls and boys. Alternatively, it may instead reinforce dominant gender norms when teachers, parents and children who are comfortable with the status quo feel threatened if they are reluctant to accept the new social order that discourses of gender equality bring in the primary schools. Yet these Discourses (of gender equality brought about by the advent of FPE) would still be the means which children in particular who are labelled as deviant or subversive of the traditional gender norms use to construct their own gender identity. Therefore this study has suggested strategies that could be employed to support and affirm discourses that challenge dominant gender norms that reproduce gender inequality in the primary schools.

However, the work of Foucault has been criticised for its lack of attention to imperialism, capitalism and patriarchy which according to materialist theorists play an important role in the reproduction and sustenance of gender inequalities in our communities, and particularly in the primary schools. For example, a contemporary materialist theorist, Rosemary Hennessy (1993) has argued for a

position which she terms 'resistance postmodernism'. The aim of 'resistance postmodernism' is to adopt many of the insights which the discursive accounts of the production of subjectivities in the construction of gender offer. It also seeks to add to them further materialist elements which are essential in the development of effective political agency against gender inequality in the primary schools. Hennessy challenges Foucault's notion of power purely as micro-power, which becomes evident in the unpacking of discourses in specific and local settings (Alsop, Fitzsimons & Lennon, 2002, p.88).

Hennessy (1993) contends that Foucault's attention to micro-power renders invisible 'systematic hierarchies' within societies that make gender power as exploitation. The instance of these hierarchies in which relations of gender, race and class are constructed is reiterated particularly in the writings of black feminists (James & Busia, 1993; Alexander & Mohanty, 1997). Links, for instance, have been noted between changes in the discourses related to women and girls, and changes in domesticity as the labour needs of the capitalist market shift (Jackson, 1995). In unpacking these entanglements between discursive and materialist factors Hennessy (1993, p.25) contends that without attention to such causality we cannot explain the relationship between such phenomena as sexual violence against girls, the feminization of poverty and denigrating representations of femininity. It is also the contention of this study that there is a dialectical relationship between discursive and materialist factors regarding the construction of gender in the primary schools. This is so because both factors play a vital role

to shape gender relations, and therefore, we must attend to the causality between the two as a strategy to understand how gender inequality is constructed as well as how it can be challenged.

The following subsection discusses the materialist accounts of the construction of gender.

3.3.2 Materialist Theories of Gender

Materialist theorists such as Wittig (1992); Delphy (1993); MacKinnon (1993); Hennessy (1993) are gender theorists who regard the social structures as systems of power and control which give rise to sets of social relations. According to this analysis the social relations of gender are ones in which girls and women are treated as inferior and subordinate to boys and men. Therefore, materialist theorists perceive gender divisions as exploitative and oppressive (Alsop, Fitzsimons & Lennon, 2002). These theorists see gender differences as rooted in social relations which give rise to certain social practices that produce and reproduce gender inequality:

People are made into men and women [girls and boys] by particular positions which they are allocated in the social order. To understand what is to be a [girl or boy] in a given society is to grasp with the social relations involved.

(Alsop, Fitzsimons & Lennon, 2002, p.68)

In other words, there is a material reality of gender categories which, even though socially constructed, constrains and forms boys and girls, men and women into categories. This analysis suggests that if boys and girls became what they are because of the social relations determined by the social positions

allocated to them in their society, then without these relationships we cannot modify dominant constructions of gender and their concomitant inequalities. That is, it is through these relationships that gender inequality could be challenged. Therefore, gender inequality in the primary school cannot be addressed without challenging and changing the subservient social positions allocated to girls and women, as well as those allocated to boys whose masculinities do not conform to dominant constructions of what is to be a normal boy. This study uses this understanding to provide strategies through which we can challenge and possibly modify dominant constructions of gender which relegate girls particularly to subservience.

The work of Marx was the starting point for the materialist theorists. For instance, Marxist theorists such as Hartman (2002); Walby (1997); Moyo (1998) have asserted that the class system as organised by the capitalist state creates gender inequality, particularly through the division of labour and property ownership rights. According to Hartman (2002) private property in capitalist society meant that men became the owners of property, while women as non-owners of property depended on the men. The social processes that breed this inequality also encouraged asymmetrical relations amongst and between boys and girls, and particularly in the primary schools. For instance, within the Basotho communities this could explain how and why the power of men over women is directly linked to women's not being able to own any immovable property. Within this context, women are seen mainly as existing to reproduce male 'heirs' who

could follow in the footsteps of their fathers as property owners (Molapo, 2005). These communities have therefore tended to place more value on 'heir' boys rather than girls or other boys who are not 'heirs' thereby shaping unequal power relations between and amongst boys and girls of different social categories (see Chapter 2). The ways in which contemporary Basotho communities, as exemplified in the three schools studied in this research, construct gender and gender inequality in this regard, are examined in this thesis.

The concepts of capitalism and gender inequality are closely linked to patriarchy. Capitalism emphasises production and individual effort, through gendered division of labour. Patriarchy ensures that women and girls are subordinated, for instance, through giving men control over their women's (wives') bodies, in terms of their fertility and sexuality and through men's and boys' exercise of control over women and girls through violence, particularly domestic and sexual violence (MacKinnon, 1993). Yet capitalism and patriarchy serve the same end – that of relegating women and girls to subservience. Materialist theorists have been particularly outspoken against patriarchy as the important vehicle for gender inequality in our society, and particularly in the primary schools. To this end, theorists such as Ritzer (1996); Coetzee, 2001); Lindsey (1997); Basow (1992) have all illustrated how patriarchal capital serves to render society and its institutions oppressive to girls and women in support of male supremacy.

As discussed in the previous subsection, there has been a growing awareness of the need to incorporate subjectivity and self-understanding in the analyses of the construction of gender. The widespread attention to difference was one of the catalysts to the shift from social theorizing of the construction of gender away from materialists' accounts of patriarchal structures as 'things', and towards a concern with 'words' (Alsop, Fitzsimons & Lennon, 2002). As indicated above, materialist accounts of 'things' refer specifically to women's position in the labour market, women's and girls' position in the household, women and girls' education, male control of sexuality and the pervasiveness of rape (Barrett, 1992, p.201), and sexual violence, particularly in the primary schools.

This leaves out the meanings that women, girls, boys and men in these categories make of themselves in relation to gender and to their social positions generally. Theorists in this camp tend to focus more on the systemic (rather static) hierarchies of gender relations and inequalities, even if they accept the socially constructed nature of these hierarchal categories. Materialist theorists have thus failed to accommodate the discursive construction of gender as an aspect of subjectivity. They have also been unable to explain how gender as an aspect of self-understanding is constructed or how this subjective understanding intersects with the structural gender divisions which materialist theorists have accentuated (Alsop, Fitzsimons & Lennon, 2002).

It is the contention of this study that both discursive and materialist factors of the construction of gender are important to consider in the work towards gender equality. This is particularly the case in the context of Lesotho primary schools, where through the social relationships and practices (for instance, through school chores and sporting activities) girls and boys are allocated into categories that reinforce traditional gender stereotypes. It is also the case within this context where language is invariably used in such multiple and fluid ways (sometimes derogatively) to mean different things depending on whether one is male or female (see Chapter 1). As also discussed in chapter 2, primary schooling in Lesotho is characterised by multiple and inequitable experiences depending on the birth order in the case of boys and whether one is a boy or a girl. These factors are maintained through discursive processes (such as the use of language and meanings attached to things) as well as by structural realities of inequality that tend to privilege males at the expense of females.

This means that girls and boys, including parents and teachers construct gender in multiple ways because of the variable experiences they are exposed to within the schools depending of their gender (and birth order for boys). This study sought to analyse both the discursive and materialist processes (and/relationships) in the construction of gender. It utilised the social constructionist epistemology which interprets these processes as multiple and fluid given the variable experiences that boys and girls are exposed to within their schooling contexts.

3.4 CONCLUSION

The chapter has introduced the social constructionist paradigm as the guiding theoretical framework for the study. At the heart of the social constructionist paradigm is the view that our ways of seeing the world are generated by social relations rather than by external realities. Therefore, a study of humans, like this study, should focus on how through social relationships, parents, teachers and children perceive and make sense of the world around them in relation to issues of gender. The social constructionist paradigm views children as active social beings, who actively and through social relationships, 'do' construct the ways and means through which they engage with issues of gender. Within this context of active and inventive processes of gender construction, power and agency play a vital role to either inhibit or facilitate processes of change in gendered social relations. In this regard, the chapter briefly discussed dynamics around gender, power and agency and considered possibilities for continuity and change in gender inequality in the primary schools, and within the context of FPE.

Guided by the social constructionist paradigm, the chapter also discussed theories on the social construction of gender, particularly discursive and materialist theories. These theories offer more flexible and comprehensive perspectives on the processes of the construction of gender. As such, they have been useful conceptual and analytical tools in this study to explore how parents, teachers and children in Lesotho primary schools are constructed by gendered

social positions allocated to them in their communities/schools. These theories also illustrate how these participants actively construct their own subjectivities and self-understanding in relation to issues of gender.

In relation to Lesotho primary schools and the Basotho society at large, the conceptual analysis in this chapter suggests that the inception of FPE with the aim to address gender inequality means that in the official rhetoric, in the political argument and in the ecclesiastical voice, at least, the foundations of gender inequality are no longer acceptable. Yet in the world of everyday practice the battle to control values, meanings, symbols and practices that underpin gender inequality still rages on. This study has demystified some of these values in the manner in which parents, teachers and children engage with issues of gender. It also learnt from these participants' engagements with issues of gender to further suggest strategies that could be employed to infuse gender equality in the everyday processes of ordinary schooling in the primary schools within the context of FPE.

Based on these frameworks two main issues and propositions in relation to the questions this study set out to answer (see chapter 1) have emerged: First, parents, teachers and children within the context of FPE construct gender in relation to the social relationships and categories allocated to them through social practices and discourses in their communities/schools. These participants, through 'moments of praxis' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 19992, p127) (the living

through experiences) also construct their own subjectivities in relation to gender, which enable them to challenge the hierarchical gendered relationships and categories inscribed to them by dominant discourses within their contexts. Therefore, informed by these frameworks, the analytical focus of the study was on:

- The discourses and practices that affirm inequitable and hierarchical gender categories and social relations amongst and between boys and girls, as well as how these could be challenged and possibly modified;
- The logic of agency - for instance, what conditions are conducive for effective exercise of agency that advances gender equality; and
- How such conditions could be incorporated in the in/formal processes of primary schooling within the context of FPE.

The aim of this analysis was to attend to the inescapable reciprocity between materialist and discursive perspectives with regards to the construction of gender. Therefore, it sought to illuminate how we could harness ruptures of contingent agency and micro-operations of power, particularly in how children construct gender and the systemic hierarchies of social gender relations/categories. This has enabled the study to suggest systematic and yet comprehensive strategies that would help to organise for effective political agency against gender inequality in the primary schools.

In chapter 4, I discuss how I have incorporated some of these paradigms in the research design, methods and methodologies of this study, blending them with alternative ways to actively engage children especially in the research processes.

The aim is to illuminate further the ways and means through which parents, teachers and children construct gender, and what we can learn from these constructions that might help address gender inequality in the primary schools, and within the context of FPE.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCHING GENDER: METHODOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

A central premise of this thesis is that primary schooling is an active site for the construction of gender. Therefore, efforts to explore the nature of gender in/equality and to improve gender relations in the schools should be informed by the participants' practices and discourses of gender at the school level. As such, the main question in this study has been to understand how parents, teachers and children make meaning of, and enact gender in their everyday schooling encounters. A challenge has been how to produce a text which is not random, or just a reflection of my own ideas, but which is credible and trustworthy (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001) in relation to how these participants engage with issues of gender. To ask teachers, parents and children their perspectives of gender in contexts in which they live may seem an obvious strategy. However, as illustrated in chapter 2, it is rarely used by researchers. Perhaps this might be connected with the conceptualization of children as passive, vulnerable, uninformed and untrusted, rather than as active social agents (Renold, 2005).

Answering these questions is the focus of this chapter. I show how the ontology, epistemology, study design, research methods, research processes and data analysis produced a useful and credible account of teachers', parents' and

children's constructions of gender. Many people would think that the involvement of children in this study increased the risks that the study could be an ethical nightmare - full of pitfalls to be avoided. The risks stem from the fact that the research involves boys and girls, that I am a man and that I am researching a sensitive issue like gender in which, as a man I am intricately entangled. I begin this chapter by addressing these issues head on – discussing the ontological, epistemological and methodological solutions.

4.2 SEEING MYSELF IN THE RESEARCH PROCESSES

The construction of knowledge in any project is, indeed, largely determined by the researcher. Feminist theories have advanced arguments that the “politics of the researcher” are a central issue in the production of knowledge (Griffiths, 1998, pp.130-134). With such significant power, it is important for the researcher to use a ‘confessional voice’ to examine her/his values, knowledge, position and purpose in order to uncover her/his influence in the construction and production of research knowledge (Stanko & Lee, 2003). The researcher must therefore engage in responsive research practices which again implicate her/him as a subjective agent (Scott, 1996). I brought to this research project my own positioning as a man, values, power, strengths and weaknesses which have intricately inflected this study.

My identity in this study is both an ‘outsider’ and ‘insider’. I am an ‘outsider’ in that I am studying constructions of gender in Lesotho rural primary schools as a

research student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. To some degree this positions me within the tradition of 19th century Anglo-American researchers studying distant, exotic and developing communities (Banks, 2001). But I am also an ‘insider’ in that I am a Lesotho citizen, a man who was born, grew up and schooled in Lesotho rural primary schools – studying gender in Lesotho rural primary schools. This perspective of examining one’s own society has currency in post-modern ethnography where the familiar is made strange (Marcus, 1998).

Yet I have adopted a critical stance to education and gender. This together with my political concern that gender equality should suffuse Lesotho primary schooling situates me beyond the “binary of insider/outsider polarity and familiarity and strangeness” (Atkinson & Hamersley, 1998, pp.110-111). My identity in this study, therefore, involves a hybrid of insider-outsider position. This position conjoins the outsider’s critical theoretical perspective informed by the principles of gender equality and insider’s knowledge of the politics and dynamics of gender inequality in Lesotho primary schooling.

As a child, I grew up in a family headed by an old father⁸ with a mother and many sisters. My family always put me under pressure to grow up quickly so I could protect them, particularly my sisters. The situatedness of the nature of problems that my family encountered especially due to the patriarchal nature my community had far reaching adverse consequences for me and my family. As a young boy, I endured such personal emotional (sometimes physical) pain and psychological insecurities. This was primarily because the patriarchal nature of my community required an active male (brother/father) in the family to address some of the challenges. Yet my father was seemingly very old and unable to contend with some of these challenges. Perhaps these experiences culminated in a particularly critical perspective to education and my political inclination to work for gender equality. These experiences might as well have principally inculcated in my mind the centrality of unearthing local meanings that individual (especially young) people make about their lives and challenges that local communities face as a valid means of knowing.

⁸ The first wife of my father died after they had six daughters. Due to the cultural minority status of females in Basotho communities there were worries that all the cattle, sheep and fields that belonged to my family would be inherited by other Morojele families who had boys who were entitled by law to own property. Consequently, my father married (albeit, as I was informed, with much contempt from extended family members) a second wife (my mother) at the age of sixty, with whom they were blessed with a first born boy (myself). I was named Pholoho (which means salvation/redemption) denoting that my birth rescued my family from loosing all its property to extended family members upon the death of my father. From a very early age I was socialised to be protective of my sisters against the social ills to which the patriarchal Basotho society relegated girls and women. I was also pressurised to grow up quickly so I could take on my father's responsibilities as he grew older and became unable to carry out some of the male duties. To grow up quickly so I could protect my sisters (girls and women) was part of my earliest consciousness of being. This might partly explain my political inclination towards gender equality, which has informed my interest to undertake this research project.

I am aware of the wider social and structural gender inequalities, which also informed the community in which I grew up. As such, it is easy to claim that any means of knowledge production should stress the need to locate gender inequalities not in the individual or local community. But this must be in the wider context of social and structural power relations (Smith, 1990), so that gender is re-located within broader inequalities. I resist buying into this perspective since I strongly believe that this can have a paralyzing effect on the potential for changing gender inequalities. This perspective also has a danger of reproducing micro/macro binaries as criticised by Mohanty (1992) and producing notions of ordinary people as powerless. The social constructionist paradigm (discussed in chapter 3) also resists this view of the inevitability of given forms of oppression:

One of the explicit aims of much social constructionist research is to analyse the power relations within which people live their lives and thus within which their experience is framed, and to offer an analysis which allows the person to facilitate change.

(Burr, 1995, p.111)

But poststructuralist approaches can also paralyze change:

Thus post colonial theory and criticism have increasingly become riven by a contradiction: the social referents in the post colonial world call for urgent and clear solutions, but because speaking positions in a poststructural[ist] world are thought to be always immanently contaminated by being part of a compromised world, post colonial critics often resort to a sophisticated form of rhetoric whose main aim seem to be to revert attention permanently on the warps and loops of discourse.

(Quayson, 1999, p.8)

Quayson argues that poststructuralism must both deconstruct or 'look away' at the phenomenon under analysis and at the same time integrate the analysis into larger affirmative projects (1999). Therefore, there is a need to emphasise

diversity in human experience. Research should explore the intricacies of particular power networks, which exist simultaneously and often overlay each other. It must also explore the contradictions in practices and discourses of oppressive gender norms and in participants' (parents', teachers' and children's) location which enable them to resist, challenge and subvert (Mohanty, 1992) forms of gender inequality in a society.

Epistemologically therefore, I construct my research to be situated and located, to explore the complex power dynamics in children's relationships – with each other, with teachers, with parents and with me – and to interpret these within broader social networks. I consider how these networks position children in particular ways, and at the same time how children engage and resist that positioning. I have employed a social constructionist paradigm which explores how gender meanings are constructed in multiple and diverse ways, and how these are connected to broader social/structural relations. I have adopted a reflexive stance to research (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). Thus, I have used ethnographic methodologies (observations and informal conversations) (Hey, 1997) to learn about the everyday schooling experiences of children, teachers and parents, and participatory methodologies (Smith, Taylor & Gollop, 2000; Adams & Ingham, 1998; Christensen & James, 2000) to respect the agency of the research participants. The study also used conventional research methodologies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Mouton, 2001, Neuman, 1997) to

understand social/structural patterns of gender relations and the broader social context of my research.

My own ontological and epistemological orientations have informed the design, research methods and processes, and data analysis in this study. The following sections discuss these issues highlighting the challenges and possibilities in carrying out this research project.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A multi-site case study design was used to address the research questions in this study. Case studies are used to compile comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth information related to a single, bounded unit of analysis (Patton, 1982). In this study, the bounded unit of each case was a school, with the total of three schools. My approach to case study moved from single contextual sites to examine constructions of gender in diffuse time-space (Marcus, 1998). The phenomena of gender are complex and deeply embedded in the context (Lee & Stanko, 2003). A multi-site case study approach enabled me to compare and contrast findings across the cases thereby increasing confidence in the overall findings and conclusions of this study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Originally I had planned to conduct my research in three primary schools from different religious denominations in order to see if there could be any particular ways in which religion impacted on the constructions of gender in the schools. I could not find a Roman Catholic Church in the area where my study was based. My research

was then conducted in two schools from the Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC) and one from the Anglican Church of Lesotho (ACL).

Using conventional research methods – questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis this study elicited data that helped to understand the macro context of FPE and the nature of gender in/equality in the primary schools. Yet it did not rely on these (conventional research methods) to understand the contextual architecture framing these concepts (Marcus, 1998). Thus, the study also investigated aspects of gender within variously situated schooling contexts through the associations and connections it suggested amongst the schools. In this regard, ethnographic methods (observations and informal conversations) were used to trace the contextual and cultural formation of gender across and within multiple sites of activity focusing on the three primary schools.

My interest was to elicit patterns of gender constructions and relations that may be drawn from the articulated differences and similarities in gender practices and discourses between and within different schools. This enabled a more rigorous assertion by this study about the nature of gender in/equality in the context of FPE, and the strategies that could be employed to address gender inequality in different schooling sites at a more general level. Yet, the study did not fall short of also unearthing dynamics of gender constructions within and across schools which had implications for gender in/equality in particular school contexts.

The assumption that micro studies of three primary schools could illuminate systematic social practice (gender) raises the question of generalisability. Qualitative micro-studies elicit a wealth of minutiae and enable close analysis of the research data within particular contexts but there are difficulties situating such studies within an understanding of the macro context. Cicourel (1981, pp.55-60) averted this worry when he argued that “macro phenomena are aggregations and repetitions of micro everyday experiences”. The author criticised the conceptual divisions between these levels as false constructions of researchers. Indeed, the fact that micro and macro levels are connected and interactive can often be seen by micro-level researchers’ references to macro-theoretical concepts and the micro-level exemplars used by macro-level theorists (Cicourel, 1981). For that reason, the ‘micro-macro interface’ divests this study from needing to increase the school sample quantitatively to represent further examples of Lesotho rural primary schools.

The following section addresses the ethical issues of the study. These include the processes of gaining access to the schools and the processes I followed to procure informed consent from various participants.

4.4 ACCESS TO SCHOOLS AND PERMISSION FROM PARTICIPANTS

In the beginning of 2006, when I had developed the research instruments I relocated from Durban to Lesotho where I was going to conduct data in three

primary schools for the most part of that year. The University of KwaZulu-Natal requires that researchers submit proposals for ethical clearance. Clearance was granted to me subject to a set of conditions which I had to comply with before going to the field (see Appendix B for details on the ethical clearance granted for this study). One of the ethical issues to address was to ensure that I follow proper procedures for gaining access to the schools, and that all participants in my study give informed consent to participate in the study (see Appendices C – L).

I went to the local (Leribe) education district office to request permission to conduct research in the schools, a consent of which was provided in the form of a written official letter (see Appendices C and D). Although I already knew the schools where I wanted to conduct my study, I had requested the district office not to write the names of the schools in the letter so as to secure anonymity of these schools. This also assisted me in insuring that schools that were to take part in the study would do so voluntarily as my letter from the district office was open, only saying that I was authorised to conduct research in three primary schools in the Leribe district. So if a school did not want to take part I was free to go to any other primary school within the Leribe district.

I then went to request permission to conduct my research in the schools. The principle was that such schools should be implementing FPE and that they should be rural schools, and willing to participate in my study. The processes of

selecting the schools and research participants or 'sampling' (Jessop, 1997) drew on Glaser and Strauss's (1996) concept of *theoretical* sampling. This is sometimes, termed *purposive* sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Thus, I targeted schools and group of participants that I thought were likely to yield the richest information for the questions under study (Cohen & Manion, 1994). I first spoke to the principals of the schools, and after they had signed a letter of informed consent I arranged with them when I could have chance to request permission from teachers. In the preamble of my letter of informed consent I had made it clear that I was conducting research in three Lesotho rural primary schools.

The acting principal at one school came to me with great concern the following day when I was going to collect a signed letter of informed consent. She said:

Mr. Morojele I considered your request, read your letter and consulted with a few teachers yesterday to see if someone would be interested in your research. We would like to assist you but unfortunately you have come to a wrong school. I understand you are doing research in rural schools, and please know that we do not consider ourselves as a rural school. I advise you to go and try another school.

(Acting Principal: Maloaleng primary school)

For a moment I did not know what to say. In my own classification of what I thought was rural, which included the fact that school is located in a rural village, is away from the main road, has few dilapidated classrooms, and children walked long distances (even crossing rivers), this was a rural school. I insisted that I would still want to continue my research even though this was not a rural school. The acting principal advised me to scratch the part where it says rural in my letter of informed consent and then she signed.

I realised the possibility that I might have made assumptions about the schools which the people in the schools did not share. I was confronted with the question of deciding whose way of classification should be regarded as the appropriate one. For instance, should it be my own presupposed assumption or how the people in the school classify their school? My own ontological and epistemological stances enabled me to resolve this dilemma in a way that affirmed the aims of this study. I decided that since my research sought to understand the experiences of teachers, parents and children in the schools and the meanings they attach to their contextual realities and experiences about gender, then their way of classification should reign. That is why I changed the title of this thesis by removing the word 'rural' and instead said the study was conducted in three Lesotho primary schools.

In all the three schools I was given the opportunity to present the aims of my research to teachers in a staff meeting. In these meetings I indicated to the teachers what I would expect from them and the children and how I thought my research would affect them and the children. I also told teachers that they were free to decide not to participate in the study or could withdraw later if they wish, reassuring them that this would not affect them in any negative way. But I was afraid to emphasise that even the whole school may decide to withdraw from my research later, as I only had that time to do data collection. I feared that would have huge time implications for the entire research project especially knowing

that towards the end of that year (2006) I was scheduled to go to the United Kingdom (University of London) as part of my PhD research programme. After each presentation in each school, I gave out the letters of informed consent and collected them early the following day.

I also requested parents to allow their children to participate in my research by signing letters of informed consent. For this I had to wait for parents' meetings to be held in the schools. Most parents signed letters of informed consent indicating their willingness to participate and allowing their children to participate in my research. Children whose parents did not sign letters of informed consent did not participate in the study. The principals also introduced me to the School Governing Body (SGB) members who also consented that I may conduct research in the schools.

I went an extra mile in also requesting children themselves to participate in my research indicating that they might decide to withdraw if they decide to do so, regardless of whether their parents or teachers still wanted them to participate. In this way I was illustrating that I accept children as responsible human beings who can make their own decisions. I also wanted to rest assured that children were not coerced by parental authority to participate in the study. This only referred to those whose parents allowed them to participate in the first place, not the ones who would not have taken part from the beginning. Once I had procured informed consent of willingness to take part in the study from all the participants, I began a

full scale data collection and production. The following schools⁹ participated in the study:

- Maloaleng Primary school
- Molalana Primary School
- Tsuoe-Tsuoe Primary School

Chapter 5 provides a fuller description of the schooling sites, highlighting in general how gender was an organizing matrix in the structural and social organisation of the schools.

4.5 CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN THE SCHOOLS

This study used questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis in a conventional fashion to explore the structural and social categories of gender in the schools. The study also employed ethnographic methods of data production using interviews, conversations and observations to investigate gender practices and discourses in the everyday schooling encounters. In this section, I analyse and reflect on the usefulness and challenges of conducting research using these methods.

4.5.1 Questionnaires

I began the data collection by submitting questionnaires to teachers. The questionnaires were meant to elicit teachers' perceptions about gender and the

⁹ I used pseudonyms for the schools that participated in the study. As a symbol of the chronology of my life discoveries/constructions I named the schools after the mountains that surround the valley of the village where I grew up to symbolise the order of my journeys in these schools when carrying out this research project.

challenges facing gender equality in their respective schools. I also used questionnaires to collect data related to the strategies employed in the implementation of FPE to improve gender equality, the nature and quality of human and physical resources available in the schools/communities. The impact of the FPE implementation on gender equality in the schools as well as the challenges stakeholders encountered in their efforts to implement FPE were also elicited through the questionnaires. Questionnaires were also used to provide data regarding the social and economic context of the schools and how this affected effective implementation of FPE and improvement of gender equality in these schools (see Appendix M).

The assumption was that this would give teachers a sense of what my research was all about, and allow them to complete the questionnaires over a relaxed long period, free to ask me questions as I come to their schools. I also thought that once the questionnaires had been completed I would be able to capture issues that teachers raised and to follow them up in the observations and interviews. In the beginning, I realised that there was anxiety from most teachers to answer questionnaires correctly. In order to counteract this, I had to explain and convince teachers, especially in my informal encounters, that they should not try to answer 'correctly' since what I needed was their genuine experiences and perceptions of gender in the schools.

I remember that in those difficult beginning days the one male teacher (Mr Khalana) at Maloaleng primary school came to me a few minutes after I gave and explained the questionnaires to the teachers. He said:

Hey Mr. Morojele, I see your questionnaire but I am sorry there is nothing I can say about it [I looked puzzled]. I like to help people who do research but you see the problem is your topic. I don't have anything to say about gender issues, I am sorry, I know it feels impolite but I thought I should be honest with you [handing back the questionnaire].

(Mr Khalana: Maloaleng primary school)

I realised that he did not write anything on the questionnaire. I said to him 'it's okay, perhaps we would talk more about this later as I come to visit your school this year'. But I could not hide my frustration. This was the only male teacher in all the three schools, and I really wanted his engagement in my research. I left him like that not wanting to reason with him given the strong emotions that he relayed his story with, but I hoped I would get him to complete the questionnaire later. I did succeed later, and he provided valuable information for the study.

Questionnaires assisted me to get information from the teachers in a non-threatening way (Neuman, 1997). To address the question of fear of being identified, I wrote in the questionnaires the purpose of the research and assured teachers that they should feel free to complete the questionnaires as their real names could not be used in the reports and thesis. This enabled teachers to feel free to provide the information which they would otherwise be unwilling to disclose in an eye-to-eye situation. The questionnaires consisted of closed dichotomous questions, wherein teachers were given a yes or no answer without

being allowed to make remarks (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). These were followed by open ended questions which allowed the teachers to expatiate the stand they took on the close-ended questions (Mouton, 2001), thus express their views freely (see Appendix K). Since this study was mainly qualitative, 80% of the questions were open-ended giving room for the teachers to reason out their personal opinions.

Ultimately, at Molalana primary school all 13 teachers returned completed questionnaires which I gave, eight of the nine teachers at Tsuoe-Tsuoe returned completed questionnaires, whereas only five out of seven teachers at Maloaleng returned completed questionnaires. In all, out of 28 teachers who participated in this study from the three schools, 26 of them returned completed questionnaires. Mr Khalana refused to complete the questionnaire but said he would advise me informally about issues of gender, and what I must be careful about as I try to promote gender equality. In our conversations later as he tried to explain his views on gender and gender equality he saw the importance of completing the questionnaire, and he finally did.

4.5.2 Document Analysis

I also analyzed documentary materials about the FPE policy and tried to identify salient issues relating to gender within various school documents (see Appendix S). In particular, I observed the FPE policy documents, schools' mission statements, minutes of the staff meetings and enrolment and class attendance

registers. This method was important because it provided valuable information that might not be accessible by other means (Valdez, 2004). For example, it provided me with information about aspects that I could not observe because they took place before I began my research in the schools. It also allowed me to reflect on plans that were intended by the schools which had not been realised in actual implementation of FPE. Another advantage of this method was that documents were generated contemporaneously with the events they refer to. So, they were less likely to be subject to memory decay or distortion compared with data obtained from interviews or questionnaires (Tesch, 1987).

4.5.3 Interviews

I prepared a semi-structured interview schedule for teachers and parents. The purpose of this interview schedule was to assist in triangulating data collected through questionnaires. This schedule also provided an interactive context in which, for instance, teachers could express their views beyond the bounds of a written questionnaire with only a limited space. In the beginning I held formal interview sessions but later I realised it was no longer important especially with teachers as I would find myself talking to them throughout the day about issues that arose in the classroom, playground, and during lunch time. I felt that these informal conversations were important as they often followed an incident that happened in the school, or disciplinary cases or disputes between teachers and some children. My ultimate goal with these interviews was to understand the meaning teachers and parents make about their experiences of gender and

these interviews provided a necessary room for this purpose (McCracken, 1988; Measor, 1985). Parents were only involved in this study by means of these formal semi-structured interviews with a total of 10 parents per school.

Later on I adapted the teachers' interview schedule to be informed by the responses teachers made in the questionnaires, particularly the open-ended sections. This enabled me to identify and include in the interviews issues and themes of interest that emerged in the questionnaires which I might otherwise not recognise. The interviews also provided teachers and parents with the opportunity to 'speak for themselves', and thus to attribute the ownership and authorship of this thesis to the people and communities where the study was based (see Appendix O for details on teachers' interview schedule).

Interviews with parents were conducted in *Sesotho* and later transcribed and translated to English (see Appendices P and Q for both the English and *Sesotho* versions of parents' interview schedule respectively). With the permission of the participants, a tape recorder was used, but where I felt participants became apprehensive I preferred notes instead of a tape recorder. It is important also to note that as participation in the study was voluntary, only female parents displayed willingness to participate in this study.

4.5.4 Observations

Observational methods were used in this study mainly to obtain a thorough description of FPE in the schools. I carefully identified children's and teachers' interactions and processes in the implementation of FPE and the value of these interactions in contributing to gender equality in the schools (see Appendix R). This method enabled me to identify important reactions in the construction of gender which participants might ignore willingly or unwillingly in an interview. It also allowed me to understand and interpret the implementation of FPE and its contribution to gender equality by providing personal knowledge and direct experience (Neumann, 1997). In particular, I observed the classroom activities, school assembly, the feeding scheme; toilets and anything in the school that I thought affected teachers, parents, and boys and girls in the schools (Valdez, 2004; Patrick & Middleton, 2002).

As mentioned earlier, this study foregrounded the significance of understanding everyday experiences of teachers and children in the schools, as a basis for exploring gender in/equality in the primary schools. Such experiences can only be elicited by flexible and reflexive approaches, which include spending more time with children and teachers in the schools. In order to achieve this, the study used the last two methods described above (interviews and observations) in more flexible and adaptive ways in trying to understand experiences of teachers and children. This enabled the study to unveil the discourses and practices

through which teachers and children constructed gender in their everyday endeavours. The following subsections analyse the ethnographic processes that the study employed, the challenges and my own reflections about these processes. Unfortunately, because of the limited nature of parental involvement in the schooling processes, it was not possible to conduct ethnographic methods with parents in this study. Parents' views were only elicited by means of semi-structured interviews (see subsection 4.5.3 above).

4.5.5 Doing Ethnography in the Primary schools

In this subsection I provide a snapshot of my experiences as an ethnographer in the schools under study. These experiences are important as they outline the social scenery under which data for this study was produced and constructed. Indeed, my experiences and impressions about various school contexts had a bearing on how I collected and made sense of the data. Locating the researcher firmly in the research processes reflects changes in research patterns (Arber, 2000; Lather, 1991). This enables analysis of power relations between the researcher and research participants which are important to consider in a research project. As such, I was endlessly conscious about the effects of my presence in the schools on the nature of the data we produced. That is why this thesis does not claim to provide a clear-cut presentation of gender constructions in the primary schools. Rather, this thesis is a culmination of “something contracted and contested, something presented and re/presented in a process of

translated, moulded and negotiated codes of understanding” (Bhana, 2002, p.69).

4.5.5.1 Some general reflections

When I started data production processes I had little understanding about issues of gender in the primary schools. I did not think much about what I was bringing with me into the research (Thorne, 1993). For instance, I was not aware of the significance of my perceptions and experiences, or of the participants’ perceptions of me on the research processes I was about to undertake, even though the strength of my study was that it focused mainly on located meanings and subjectivities of gender. Yet I was also concerned about how, as a subjective gendered being, I would address my own subjectivities about undertaking the research processes of this nature. My main subjectivity in this project was a conviction to undertake a PhD fieldwork research. This assisted me to overcome my own anxieties about undertaking the ethnographic aspects of the study.

During the early stages of my fieldwork teachers were attending workshops in preparation for the national census conducted in April 2006 where many primary school teachers participated. I felt fragile in the beginning of the process, as if something was just going to break on me, or that I would fail drastically. I had read about ethnographic research but I had never done it before. The fact that I had already done the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews provided some consolation that, at least, I would not come with nothing in case anything

went wrong. My anxiety involved the perceived little time that I had to undertake an ethnographic research against the backdrop of what I read in the literature that people took at least one year. It was also influenced by the knowledge that at the end of that year I would be going to the University of London in the United Kingdom as part of my PhD programme. Thus I was compelled to be through with data collection and production by that time. I spent nine months in all in the field, spending three months on each schooling site.

I had other personal issues. I had just relocated my family from Durban to stay with me in Lesotho as I could not afford the expenses. As a result, I was very depressed about the fact that my son had left what I thought was a good school in Durban and had to start a new life. He too, used to ask me very depressing questions like, “Dad, could you not do anything to make me continue my school in Durban while you do your studies in Lesotho?” In addition, I had my own baggage as a young black man from a disadvantaged and poor background, who was born in the rural mountains of Mokhotlong district¹⁰. Sometimes I felt it was just unbearable. I almost had second thoughts about doing a PhD. Such issues impacted on how I perceived and engaged with the schools especially in the beginning of the fieldwork. Conversely, I knew I had set a goal, what I thought was a noble course, to pursue, whatever the cost – that was to have a PhD. Thus I had to overcome all the obstacles.

¹⁰ I was born in a deep rural village (Molalana), where there are no schools and roads. I travelled six hours to and from school everyday since I was six years old for seven years (until I completed my primary schooling). My friends laugh at me now when I say that if we go to my home village pushing a wheel barrow, we will need to carry it on our shoulders (as there is no good-enough road) most of the time before we arrive.

My initial impressions were that because I grew up in a rural village and attended school in a rural place, I had a lot in common with the participants in the study. Mostly the principals introduced me to children in the morning assembly saying to them I was a teacher. This was despite the fact that I had told them that my role was to conduct research. Subsequently, children in the schools called me 'sir'. I tried to discourage them but I realised that was blocking communication as they did not know how to address me when they came to tell stories. I guess it was a good alternative in two schools which did not have a male teacher at all to break off from the monotony of calling every adult person in the school 'madam' and to have a 'sir' for a change. So I accepted the operational title 'sir' although I understood the asymmetrical power relations that it forged between me and the children. My anxiety was that this might impede children's freedom to share stories about gender with me. Therefore, I tried to emphasise to children individually or in groups that I was not a 'real sir' who teaches, because I was still learning, that was why I spent time with them asking questions. I had to say this as some children had even begun to ask me when I was going to start to teach. This was also meant to justify the fact that I was going to expect them to tell me lots of stories in relation to gender in the schools.

In the beginning, boys and girls used to come to me in groups based on friendships. In one incident I realised that at Molalana primary school, the principal tried to find out the nature and content of my conversations with the

children. One day as I got used to the children three girls came and told me that a day before after I left, the principal called all Standard 7 children into the classroom and asked them what they had been telling me. I got a bit nervous and asked the girls, 'and then what did you tell her'? Palesa one of the girls explained to me:

Yes sir, we didn't know what to say for a moment until..until that girl [pointing to another girl who was playing some distance way from us] Mats'eliso stood up and said, No madam, sir said it's a top secret what we were talking about, and the whole class laughed, and she left.

(Palesa: Molalana primary school)

I realised from that how my presence in the schools, doing something which the principals and teachers did not have thorough details about created anxiety. This was especially the case where I had to talk with the children in their teachers' and principals' absence. I was glad they had a way to avoid telling her but also worried about how she might take it, in the early days when I was not sure if I was really accepted in the school. Perhaps that was a bit disempowering for her. Yet the positive thing which concerned my study that I learnt later was that the phrase, 'no madam, it's a top secret' became some new way through which children, especially girls used to secure their private spaces.

In this school (Molalana primary) in particular, I was told that in the previous year, about five girls became pregnant and thus were expelled from the school. As a result, the school adopted the practice of gathering all girls aged 10 upwards and asking them in front of all the teachers questions like who goes with who after

school or who is in love with who. This was a strategy to discourage girls from having sexual relationships with boys. Normally those (only girls) who were found to be falling in love or going with boys after school were publicly ridiculed and punished. Since the construction of the discourse 'no madam, it's a top secret', I had complaints from teachers that they were no longer getting as many stories as they used to. Some girls reverted to this discourse to avoid telling stories about their relationships with boys. It appeared that girls in this school creatively took advantage of my research to inventively navigate and subvert a gender-biased school practice that aimed at humiliating them. Boys were not asked to reveal their private relationships with girls. Perhaps that was the reason why girls thought they would want to challenge such a gender biased approach to instituting discipline in the school.

The study focused particularly on the Standard 7¹¹ children as they were the ones with whom the inception of FPE in the primary school in Lesotho started. As they had spent almost their entire primary schooling under FPE I thought they would yield the richest information about the impact of FPE relating to gender equality in the schools. At Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school, many of the Standard 7 boys were from the traditional initiation/circumcision schools. The boys in this school used to tell me what I thought were horrible stories about their fantasies to date girls and force or ridicule them if they (girls) refused. I realised that each time these boys had told me a very sensitive story they would police me to ensure that I did not spend a long time talking to teachers afterwards. When I

¹¹ This is equivalent to Grade 7 in South Africa.

asked some of the boys why they always followed me around the school, one of them told me that they were not safe after they had told me the story and saw me talking to teachers. He said:

Hey sir, you, [shaking his head] we were worried what you were talking to Mrs Mary that day after we told you about the 'cave' story.

(Pule: Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school)

I asked him, what they thought I would do. Another boy said:

[looking down] you see when we tell you stories sometimes we think you may forget and tell the teachers or may be they ask you many times and you start getting tired and tell them.

(Tema: Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school)

I tried to reassure the boys that I would keep my promise not to tell anybody and that they must trust me. I realised that it was not easy as an ethnographer to be a friend of all within a school context. This was partly because there were various, sometimes contradictory, discourses with which boys and girls, and teachers constructed themselves or were constructed. I had to steer in the middle between not appearing to be too friendly with the teachers to the extent that boys and girls would feel uncomfortable that I might disclose our conversations. By the same token, I had to be careful not to be too friendly with children as I realised that made some teachers to be quite unhappy. For example, the acting principal at Maloaleng primary school would always come to me after I spent a long time with children in the field and asked me if I was okay, or if I needed any assistance. It was as if I could not afford to be there with the

children without her assistance. In the process, she was attempting to police what I was doing and talking with children.

Doing the ethnographic aspects of this study was a really challenging experience. At Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school one day I was sitting with different groups of children in a classroom talking as usual. This time it was a group of girls telling me things that they liked or did not like in the school or at home. One girl (Selloane) narrated what was apparently a case of sexual abuse (I return to this in chapter 7). We were all happy in the beginning, talking sometimes laughing a bit, but this time it was serious. Selloane burst into tears before she finished her story. I got worried and I realised the other girls got scared too. I walked with her towards the door, and when I opened I saw the principal and two teachers sitting outside one classroom. The moment she saw us she started coming towards me, shouting:

‘Mr Morojele sir, do you have any problem? How can I help you, please’?

I was nervous, I was not sure if I was fully accepted in this school yet, as the boys in the school used to sing the traditional initiation school’s songs for me which I knew teachers did not like. In general, teachers in this school despised the boys who were from initiation schools. I asked the girl, ‘Selloane are you okay? I think we must decide something before the principal arrives’. Selloane (wiping her tears) went inside the classroom where we were sitting. But I could not go in; I had to say something to the principal. I had to pretend as if nothing was wrong. It was a test for me to convince the girls, who were curiously watching, that I was really not telling their stories to the teachers. Then I held my

breath and said, (shouting so as to discourage her from coming closer) 'No, I thought Selloane was really not feeling well, but she says she's fine'. The principal said, (going back to her seat) 'Okay, it's very hot today and I told these kids not to play in the sun'. It was over with the principal but not so much with me. The girls were also very happy the principal did not discover what we were discussing.

I felt so touched by Selloane's story. I thought I should do something about it. I could not continue with the interviews that day and I wanted to go home. I wished I had a different role other than just being a researcher. I felt disempowered. Ellen (1984) said that an ethnographer must be empathetic with the participants but also be emotionally detached. Yes, of course, I had to pretend like I was emotionally detached, but I was not. I had never expected to meet these kinds of challenges and I was ill-prepared to deal with them. I think if I had expected this I would have had a better chance to respond better than I did.

Throughout all these processes, I had to think, not so much in advance, but right in the process, as things unfolded, write notes and my reflections. I always feared I would lose the confidence of some participants. As stated earlier, there were always tensions that contradicted an attempt to 'keep nice' one particular relationship. I had to be clever, put my own personal egos aside and pretend to be everyone else that I was talking to. Sometimes I had to play with children and I would find myself covered with mud all over. The teachers told me they felt

sorry for me, and that it appeared I was doing a very difficult job. Yet there was a catch for trying to be everybody. Being their friend as I portrayed myself to be, some girls would wait for me on the road after school and ask me to give them a lift home. I felt I did not like that but I did not want to disappoint them, after all they were sweet girls too. Most of the girls who requested a lift home from me were very cooperative and some of them searched for me in the school and volunteered to tell me interesting stories related to my topic. Yet, if I gave them the lift it would mean I might not have a good reason not to give everyone else. So I had to find a polite way to say 'no'. This was the case even with some teachers who wanted to take a lift with me sometimes even when I left during school hours. But I could not say no to the school principal.

I would not forget the difficulties I experienced at Maloaleng primary school. In this school the acting principal was only in good a relationship with her deputy and the rest of the teachers just disliked her. I always got depressed when I came to this school. It was fine in the beginning. After the teachers got used to me, some of them started to tell me how the principal was not educated. They claimed she was just put there by the church authorities and she did not know administration and so forth. Sometimes I felt that they expected me to say something. I really did not know what to say and in most cases I just wished I could find myself out of the school. At other times, I suspected that the acting principal felt uncomfortable if I spent too much time with her rival teachers. Overall, it was a very fragile encounter and I really felt sorry for the acting

principal who was also sick. One time some teachers told me that they were unhappy that I took her to the hospital with my car when she fainted and collapsed during the school hours.

Another time I had just conducted an interview with the acting principal and I went to conduct classroom observations as usual. Then a Standard 7 teacher said to me before allowing me to enter into her class, 'I am sure you did not believe all the lies she told you'. I told her I did not know what she was talking about (frowning a bit to secure a psychological space, but also smiling a bit so she could let me into her classroom, which she did). I was allowed to observe only certain parts of the staff meetings in this school. The acting principal would kindly ask me to leave the meeting when they discussed sensitive issues about her disputes with the teachers. I knew she did not like me to leave but one day when she did not ask me to go I felt how embarrassing it was. In that case, the teachers shouted at her, telling her how incompetent she was to run the school and so forth. In all the other subsequent meetings, when it was time to discuss issues around their disputes, she would softly whisper to me in the course of the staff meeting:

Mr Morojele, I think you may be released, from now we are going to discuss internal issues, these ones have nothing to do with the kids. It's just internal stuff.

(Acting Principal: Maloaleng primary)

I was happy in the second semester when a new principal was appointed (whom the acting principal used to always talk about in high hopes), and I knew she was happy too.

We can gather from my experiences above that a conventional PhD research is indebted to the changing research patterns that provide room for emotional data (Bhana, 2002; St. Pierre, 1997; Katzs, 1992). Troubling the research processes and the subjectivities of the researcher should be an important aspect of contemporary research initiatives. In this thesis, I foregrounded my subjectivities and emotional reactions to the research processes as important reflections to my theorizing and methodological practices.

The following subsections analyse, in more specific ways, the processes of observations and talking to children and teachers in the schools.

4.5.5.2 Observations

I set out as an observer jotting down notes and reflections throughout the day. Taking notes was central to my observational data. I realised that children and teachers were less apprehensive when I was taking notes than when I was using a tape recorder. Using a tape recorder would always be preceded by my asking for permission which meant distracting attention from spontaneous talk. Another reason was that I would find myself observing various groups in a classroom. So it was less intrusive especially in the beginning of my research if I just sat with one group but still observed and listened to what was going on in other groups. About 80% of observational data in this study was collected through taking notes, 18% through tape recording and 2% from video recording. I used video recording

mostly to capture general events like when children were playing in the field, during the morning assembly or fighting for food pushing each other in a queue at lunch time. In other words, a video recording was used in such cases where children would normally not mind me.

In the beginning I realised that teachers especially were always apprehensive of what I was doing, as if I was documenting whether they were teaching properly or not. I had to reassure them that my research had nothing to do with evaluating their teaching skills or the content of the lesson and that I was concerned with gender in the schools. In some days when my focus was on the FPE materials and their use in the classrooms, I would tell teachers concerned in advance highlighting what I was going to be observing. Sometimes it was not easy to separate the FPE curriculum issues and gender issues and I would find myself capturing them simultaneously without really arranging this with teachers. I was not always able to know in advance what would be interesting for me to document all the time.

I used to show teachers what I had written on my notes and after some time I was aware that they did not mind what I was writing. Some teachers used to tell children in their class that I was an inspector so they must behave well. I had to discourage this as it was creating tensions in the lessons. Children who I realised did not want to disappoint their teachers in front of inspectors were not feeling free to open up to the classroom discussions and challenges. But after some

time this was no longer a concern. Even the children themselves were rather curious to see what I was writing. In the beginning they used to laugh at children whose names appeared in my book as if it was because they did wrong. Later that shifted to the extent that many children became happier when they saw their names in my notes.

I used pseudonyms in my notes for the children but because of the above reason I began to use real names. The problem of using pseudonyms at this stage was that having given a particular disguised name to a child it was not easy to remember what name I gave to her/him when they featured in another incident later. So it was possible to ascribe different activities to one child in different names, and thus fail to follow up interesting patterns of behaviours in order to understand patterns of conduct of particular children. However, later when I got used to children this was no longer the case, so I kept on documenting their real names. This was also particularly useful during data analysis to enable me to give pseudonyms to children consistently – not giving different names to the same children. In this final thesis, I have reverted back to pseudonyms to protect the children's anonymity.

4.5.5.3 Conversations with children

My conversations with children were designed to prompt girls and boys to discuss aspects of their lives (whether at school or home) related to gender, and the related matters of femininities and masculinities. My intention was to

understand children's discourses and practices of gender as it occurred in their everyday lives. I was also interested in how power positions were lived through contestations, negotiations and enactments of gender. Almost all conversations with children were done in Sesotho and later these were transcribed into English.

I sat with children inside and outside the classroom through to the playing fields. I listened and observed what they said and wrote down what the children were saying, how I felt about the children and my own impressions about our conversations. Some children used to look for me around the school to tell me stories about how they travelled home the previous day after school, or at home or in the village over the weekend. In the classrooms I would move from one group to the other. My conversations with children were indiscriminate in that I could talk with boys and boys, or girls and girls, or boys and girls. Talking with children in this way was very effective in enabling me to observe and analyse how children constructed and enacted gender, and patterns of relationships in these processes. However, I realised that children preferred to talk to me, especially if they volunteered, in gender specific groups.

Many a time I would start the conversations having a very vague idea what I wanted our discussions to focus on. I would normally start with questions like:

What do you normally do during break time?

What did you do yesterday after school?

Who did you go home with?

What did you talk about?

What did you like about your talk? Say why?

Or in other cases especially after I had long been in the schools, I would just ask the children:

So what do you want to tell me today?

This was normally followed by endless stories and I would probe for more stories, until the bell rang denoting children should go to another activity. I would some times not start the conversation as some girls or boys would just come to me and say:

Sir we have a story to tell you.....

Or the boys would ask to sing traditional circumcision songs for me. They would normally start by saying:

Yes sir, you saw yesterday we did not sing well because those boys from the other group spoiled our song because they did not practice. So today we are ready to sing for you.

Chapter 5 illustrates some of the songs that children sang in the schools.

The fact that I could speak their language (*sesotho*) enabled talks of all kinds. These ranged from jokes, fairy tales, fiction stories to real stories and concerns children had about their lives or other children's lives and their teachers and parents and so on. The girls would also volunteer to sing for me, push other girls away; ask me to chase the boys away or chase the boys themselves. Even now, my mind can still replay the peaceful noise, momentary quarrels, shoutings,

clapping and rhythmic tunes that became so familiar and part of my life. I would always wish to be and talk with those young girls and boys ever again.

4.5.5.4 Talking with teachers

Interviews and conversations with teachers provided a means for exploring their perceptions and experiences about gender in the schools. These were also meant to elicit the discourses and practices through which they expressed and regulated gender. I managed to have prolonged interactions with teachers and these were sometimes informed by specific episodic incidents. For instance, observing a disciplinary case and following it up with the teacher later in a discussion. This made it possible for the study to elicit specific knowledge about teachers' attitudes and perceptions of gender and gender equality in the schools. I also focused on teachers' knowledge of gender, how they taught and lived gender. In so doing, the study managed to examine the ways in which the teachers produced/reproduced particular relations of power (Foucault, 1982), be it amongst themselves, between themselves and children, and amongst and between various categories of children.

All but one of the teachers in these schools were female. Another male teacher was employed at Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school a few weeks before I completed the fieldwork, and he did not participate in the study. As a man I initially found it challenging to establish social relations with them. I found that with one male teacher in the three schools it was very easy to be close to within a few days

since I knew him. Later we opened up to one another and some of the female teachers became even friendlier and more helpful. I used a tape recorder in few cases as I realised it created some discomfort and disrupted the natural flow of events, and thus most of the time I took notes.

Sometimes during our conversations some teachers would ask me my feelings about issues of gender as I had been asking them. I found that challenging in the beginning. However, I also realised that sharing my views with them helped make them feel like they were not being interrogated. This imbued perceptions of egalitarian and reciprocal relationships between me and the teachers. As a result, teachers normally engaged more deeply in a discussion where I also shared my views about gender compared to when I was just asking and expecting them to give all the answers. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) commented that:

If you expect to be in a position of power, you can decide to attempt to subvert your own exercise of power by undertaking research as a collaborative interactional process, with reciprocal inputs from the researcher and the researched

(Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p.159)

At this stage most teachers were still completing the questionnaires that I gave in the beginning of the fieldwork. In our conversations some teachers raised some questions regarding the questionnaire and they started to tell me their views about the questions in the questionnaire. Others would use our informal conversations to seek clarity on some questions in the questionnaire. In the course of trying to explain and asking the question back, new and interesting

directions of discussions were opened. Many a time I would not have anticipated such discussions even though they were relevant to my research inquiry.

I would not forget Mrs Mantoa, a female teacher who was 72 years old at Molalana primary school. In the beginning she said she was too old, and she thought I was not looking forward to get views from her as she was only 'a soil'¹². I explained to her that I would much appreciate her views as she was the most experienced teacher in the school. She agreed to complete the questionnaire, complaining that she could see it was a very difficult thing for her:

My grandson I know you don't need views from people who are dying like me – you see I'm a soil already [.....] and you see this is difficult, it looks like I am going to write a test which I last wrote even before you were born. [...] Hey [pointing to the questionnaire] you, that is what I don't like. You ask a question and when I say no you say why, when I say yes you still say why, hey these things of the educated, I won't manage [laughing a bit] you I'm old these things need young people who still have brains.

(Mrs Mantoa: Molalana primary school)

She said she could only answer one question a day and that each day when I come to school I must explain the next question. Then she warned me she would take the number of days equal to the number of my questions before she could finish. But she was very interesting and I enjoyed coming to her everyday to explain a question, while she complained in the background and we discussed other issues which were important to my research.

¹² A local informal expression used to refer to old people. Sometime it is used derogatively. But mostly the expression is used positively by old people themselves to denote their perceived inability to do what young people can do.

Perceptions that teachers had about me and my research influenced their interest and engagement in our discussions. Finally, I was able to talk at length with Mr Khalana (the only male teacher at Maloaleng primary school) who initially refused to complete the questionnaire. He became friends with me and even asked me to bring the questionnaire to complete after I told him that he denied himself the opportunity to write his good views so they could be considered in my research. We used to spend a lot of time after school while he explained what he called his 'philosophy' of gender and women empowerment. He also claimed that it was a futile exercise to try to empower women pointing to the teacher-principal conflicts in his school and some patrilineal aspects of the Basotho culture (I return to some of these issues in chapter 6).

Conducting ethnographic research is a complex process, replete with power, uncertainties, and sometimes contradictions, but full of continuities rather than discontinuities. Trying to present these processes in this logical and tidy fashion does not do justice to what actually happened in the field, and how it actually happened. In fact, I battled to write anything at all. I did not know where to start, what to include or exclude. Even now I still feel I might not have provided an adequate representation of the dynamics of these processes. I am inclined to believe that no amount of eloquent explanation would capture and narrate to me what exactly happened in the field if I did not do it myself. I visited each school for three months and spent a total of nine months for the entire fieldwork.

The following section presents my reflections on the issues of power, knowledge and reality in the course of data production.

4.6 POWER, REALITY AND THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

My interactions with parents, teachers and children in the primary schools were marked by profuse power relations. My relationships with them and what they understood about what I was doing became ethical issues of concern. These raised questions about the existence of power in the production of knowledge. Given my own subjectivities about how power could operate to influence the research processes, I was always careful to efface any manifestations of power in how I related and interacted with the participants of this study. For instance, I was always simultaneously torn between my thoughts about what constituted appropriate data for my research against what parents, teachers and children thought was what I required. Such decisions were informed by or informed complex operations of power in the course of data production.

To illustrate, as I engaged with the participants, writing field notes, making observations and writing my own reflections different ideas and experiences presented different perceptions altogether. This specifically related to my own beliefs about the validity and authenticity of certain methods of data production to yield valid knowledge (as explained in section 4.2 above). Issues of knowledge and power flattered my thinking. I began to ask myself questions of how power affects means of knowledge production and vice versa. I was anxious to

understand the relationships between my views as a researcher and those of the participants. And how the two affected what finally becomes knowledge regarding the constructions of gender in the schools. Although I had said in the ethical clearance application that I would ensure that I use unbiased language to express details of participants' views, I realised that I did not know what I was actually talking about.

Throughout the data production processes I was puzzled to strike a connection between the parents', teachers' and boys' and girls' ideas in the study, their experiences and the social/structural realities in the schools. I remembered the sentiments of Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) that it is difficult for an ethnographer to make connections between knowledge, power and reality. Indeed, this was true with my own experiences in this study. What I was able to produce in my research inquiry were parents', teachers' and girls' and boys' ideas or particular shared language and practices, and the social/structural categories through which dynamics of gender were expressed. In the end, I had tabulated as data the accounts and assumptions about the nature and meaning of ideas, experiences, practices and social/structural categories of gender in the schools where I conducted my research.

The biggest challenge was to make sense of the nature and meanings of all these ideas, experiences, practices and social/structural categories of gender in order to answer the questions that this study set out to explore. This was only

possible through systematic and yet reflexive processes of data analysis. The following section discusses the processes of analysing the empirical data produced by this study.

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis began in the early stages when I began reading the literature and deciding on the appropriate theoretical frameworks, methodologies and the methods utilised in this study. This proceeded throughout until I wrote the final sentence of this thesis.

Analysis of the data produced during the fieldwork followed some complex, systematic and reflexive processes. The first level of data analysis began everyday after each school visit. I typed and translated all the data I produced for the day. Later, I coded data according to themes I identified as I read and re-read the data trying to make sense of it. Miles and Huberman (1994) noted that in a coding system, codes represent key concepts and ideas in the text which enable the researcher to make sense of the data.

I then collated codes into meaningful categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1996). In this way, I was able to compare responses and the characteristics of participants. This illuminated areas of similarities and differences in how the participants constructed gender across various schooling sites. Anderson (1990) and Mouton (2001) alluded to the difficulty in trying to analyse qualitative data. These authors

advised that codes must be entered into appropriate software so as to facilitate the translation of data into frequency accounts. However, the nature of this study did not lend itself to this type of analysis. The study was concerned with how the parents, teachers and children constructed (enacted and made meaning of) gender. Therefore, frequency accounts were not of prime importance. My analysis was aimed at making sense of the complex and contextual means through which these participants construct gender. So indicating the number of participants who cited a certain variable would not have elicited the rich, complex and multiple ways through which these participants construct gender.

Thematic analysis in which data was sorted and categorised according to the emerging themes in the codes was useful in enabling the study to elucidate structural/social categories, discourses and experiences of gender in the schools. I also employed content analysis to illuminate issues that were deeply embedded in the social/structural organization of the schools which could not be interpreted from participants' ways of using words or language to express themselves. Consequently, analysis unearthed how the participants' ideas, experiences, practices and the social/structural categories of gender in the schools produce/reproduce inequitable gender relations. The study also learnt from these participants how we could challenge and possibly change beliefs, practices and the social/structural categories of gender that instil inequitable gender relations in the primary schools.

4.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have discussed the ontological, epistemological and methodological positions to this research inquiry. I have illustrated how my childhood experiences and my status - bearing the characteristics that extend beyond the insider and outsider binaries in my field of research have been useful in the study. These enabled me to conceptualise and employ methodologies, research design and methods that best helped address the questions that this study set out to explore. The chapter also reflected on the processes employed by the study for data production. These included the ethical procedures that I undertook particularly for gaining access to the schools and procuring informed consent from the participants. The reflexivity with which I conducted data production, which included giving room for subjectivity and emotional data has added to the richness of the data that this study produced. The chapter also alluded to the dilemmas inherent in the undertaking of a social science research study where uncertainties abound regarding what constitutes valid research knowledge or the experience of gender in the primary schools.

Some dilemmas discussed in this chapter were mitigated by rigorous and yet reflexive processes of data analysis. I conducted data analysis in ways that brought about logic, coherence and rigour in my text. At the same I was careful not to compromise the confounding complexities of gender 'knowledges' and realities in the schools. The study aimed at unearthing complex ways in which through social relationships parents, teachers and children construct gender.

Therefore, it was well suited to this type of analysis. Unearthing the complex local meanings that participants make about their lives in relation to gender could only be achieved through some complex, systematic and reflexive processes of data analysis. This approach was in line with my epistemological orientation (see above) which regards such meanings as dynamically situated, multiple, fluid and contingent.

What follows in the chapters to come is the analysis and interpretation of the data, starting with chapter 5 which focuses on salient gender issues in the structural and social organisation of the schools.

CHAPTER 5

STRUCTURAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOLS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter provides a descriptive analysis of the background, and structural and social information about the three schools where the study was conducted in 2006. In each case (school), the chapter describes the location, the historical background, the school's environment, and provides brief overview of the socio-economic status of parents and teacher demographics. A brief synopsis of the social lives of children is also provided. This chapter mainly utilises the close-ended sections of the questionnaire, observations and document analysis. The aim is to set out the broad structural and social scenery under which the schools operated; highlighting salient gender issues for parents, teachers and children in these schools.

5.2 TSUOE-TSUOE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Tsuo-e-Tsuo-e primary school is located on the right hand side of a mountain valley along the main road from Maputsoe (a small town across from South Africa's Ficksburg border post) to Hlotse town (capital town of the Leribe district). This place is near a small village some 8km from Maputsoe and roughly 7km to Hlotse town. The school was established by Reverend Motete who was the priest of the Lesotho Evangelical Church in that area. He gave the area for the school

to be built as the extension of the Lesotho Evangelical Church mission. It was not clear when the school was established. The oldest teacher (Mrs Limpho) in the school said that her father who was born in 1911 told her that when he was a boy he attended this school. Another elderly woman in the village (a grandmother of two children who were attending this school) reported that her sister once told her that when she was being abducted¹³ (for marriage) in roughly 1918, they stopped and rested in a huge cave near a small primary school in the village near this school. Even though she could not remember well she suspected that this could have been Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school. One of the indigenous means of knowing within Basotho communities is to relate incidents in the history against salient events that happened as a means to estimate the time when such incidents took place. Therefore, it is possible that Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school was established around 1910 or so.

During the period of this study the village near which this school is located was under the chieftaincy of Chief Sekali Morena. Children who attended the school came from the surrounding villages. Most of these were poverty stricken villages whose inhabitants still adhered to traditional Basotho culture and living styles. As such, traditional male circumcision schools were common in the villages surrounding the school. There was a complaint from teachers that some of the circumcision schools were erected very close to the school, which disturbed the

¹³ Abduction is a practice within Basotho communities where young girls are coerced into forceful marriages. Normally a girl is taken in the field away from a village on the pretext that they are going to fetch wood (for making fire) or some water. The girl is then abducted and forced into marriage with some man she does not know. Rural communities who still adhere to traditional Basotho culture tend to condone this, even though it is against the common laws of Lesotho.

freedom of movement of children leaving and coming to the school. These circumcision schools were normally conducted towards the end of the year so that boys who had just completed Standard 7 could attend when they were not required to attend formal schooling. On account of disciplinary problems that boys from circumcision schools were claimed to cause, Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school resolved in early 2006 to never accept boys who attended traditional circumcision schools.

There were cases where girls in this school fell pregnant. Such girls were suspended from school and later when they had given birth they were re-admitted to the school. However, the principal reported that some parents and teachers were not happy with this arrangement. She claimed that these parents and teachers feared that girls who had fallen pregnant would teach other girls 'bad things' and encourage them to also fall pregnant. She said despite the fact that the school did not have a policy to refuse girls who were pregnant, most girls left school once teachers discovered their pregnancy. These girls normally never returned to school even after they had given birth. It appeared that the social conditions which pregnant girls were subjected to in this school had more adverse impact on these girls than the school's policy. When teachers and parents held negative attitudes about pregnant girls, such girls stopped attending school even though there was no policy prohibiting them from attending school.

5.2.1 The School's Environment

In 2006 the school had an enrolment of four hundred and sixty (154 boys and 306 girls) children. It is surrounded by a fence which controlled free movement of the public into the school yard. Yet, at the time of this study, there were holes in the fence which I was told were made by some boys. These were usually used by children who wanted to bunk classes and leave during school hours. Some children used the holes on the fence as a refuge to escape corporal punishment which was administered to children who arrived late (after morning assembly). Otherwise, the only possible official entrance into the school was through the main gate. This gate was always closed during school hours and after school. On the right hand side on coming into the school through this gate was a huge football playground. During my visit to the school, I normally parked my car just in front of the principal's office to leave space for the playground. Yet each time boys were going to play they had to request me to move the car. As it was not possible to park it anywhere else I parked it outside the school yard in such cases. This was one noticeable way in which boys demonstrated their capacity to dominate the use of space in this school. The girls' netball pitch was squeezed in a corner behind the classrooms where there was hardly any freedom of movement to run around.

The classrooms were built in brick and the roof was made of corrugated iron sheets. There were six classrooms in all. Thus Standard 1 and 2 teachers had to share one classroom. There was no staff room for teachers in the school. The

principal had a small office located away from the classrooms near the girls' toilets. She used this office mostly to talk to visitors and to hold staff and School Governing Body meetings. Teachers used lockers in their own classrooms for keeping teaching and learning materials. There was no school tuck shop or any shop near the school. Since there was no hall either, morning assemblies were held in the open area in front of the classrooms (part of boys' football playground) wherein boys and girls from different standards formed into rows. For instance, in each class there was a row for girls followed by a row for boys. Normally the younger and shorter girls and boys respectively stood in front, followed by the older and taller, but still segregated by gender.

The school did not have electricity. It used a one tap as a means of water supply. Teachers and children in the school used pit latrines which were also located within the school yard. The boys' toilets had broken seats and were only cleaned once a week. As a man I was not allowed to enter into girls' toilets.

5.2.2 Parents

Mothers of learners in this school worked in Chinese-owned firms in the small town of Maputsoe. Poverty was rife in communities surrounding the school since many men had been retrenched from the South Africa's mines. A significant number of children had either lost both or one of their parents allegedly due to HIV and AIDS. Only mothers were actively involved in the school. They were mainly actively involved through the FPE feeding scheme where they cooked for

the children. They were in turn paid M¹⁴2.50 per meal of each child per day by the government. Normally parents shared classes such that there were seven parents each one of them cooking for standard 1 to standard 7 respectively. The duration of this was a semester (six month) after which a new round of parents took over.

It was not clear as to the work of most fathers in this school. Yet it was reported that some mothers (women who cooked for children) were employed by fathers to do this work on their behalf. This meant that although most mothers cooked for children, the money that the government paid for this purpose mainly went to the men. In a way, the men exploited women for their benefit. Dominant constructions of gender within Basotho communities ascribed cooking as a women's chore. One would then expect that women were supposed to directly benefit from this arrangement as it required cooking services. However, many of the women involved did not directly benefit from this, even if they (women) were directly involved in the cooking. The economic discrepancy that such phenomena fostered between men and women reinforced prevalent unequal gender relations within Basotho communities. This was a trend across the three schools.

¹⁴The M stands for Maluti. Maluti is a currency for the Lesotho's money. This is a legal tender which is equivalent in value to South Africa's currency. For instance, M1.00 is equal to R1.00.

5.2.3 Teachers' Profile

There were nine permanent teachers including the principal, Mrs Mapuleng who was a member of the Lesotho Evangelical Church, and one para-professional teacher¹⁵ at Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school. All teachers in this school were Basotho females except one male teacher who came to teach in this school in the third term of 2006. Most teachers lived in the surrounding areas. Those who stayed in the surrounding villages walked to school everyday and a few who stayed in Maputsoe used public transport to come to school.

Table 5.1 below illustrates teacher demographics in this school:

N=10

| Age | | No. |
|--|-----------------------------|------------|
| | Between 21 -30 | 1 |
| | Between 31 - 40 | 2 |
| | Between 41 -50 | 5 |
| | Between 51 - 60 | 2 |
| Gender | | |
| | Male | 1 |
| | Female | 9 |
| Academic qualifications | Passed Matric ¹⁶ | 4 |
| Professional/teacher qualifications | | |
| • No Formal Teaching Qualifications | | 3 |

¹⁵Para-professional teachers in Lesotho are teachers without teaching qualifications who volunteer to teach in the primary schools so that they could meet a requirement by the Lesotho College of Education (LCE) to teach for two years before they could be admitted to undertake an in-service training programme towards a diploma in education. Normally para-professional teachers do not teach independently without the assistance of a permanent teacher, and thus they share classes with other teachers.

¹⁶ In Lesotho matric is equivalent to Grade 12. It is commonly known as the Cambridge Overseas School Leaving Certificate.

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|------|
| • Primary Teacher Certificate | PTC | 1 |
| • Diploma in Teacher Education | DTE | 2 |
| • Bachelors Degree in Education | B. Ed | 4 |
| Teaching Experience | | |
| | Less than One Year | 1 |
| | From 1 - 5 | |
| | From 6 – 10 | 1 |
| | From 11 - 15 | 1 |
| | From 16 and Above | 7 |
| Average Teacher: Pupil Ratio | | 1:46 |

Table 5.1 shows that most teachers who participated in this study (70%) had taught in the primary schools for more than sixteen years. The majority (90%) of them were women with formal teaching qualifications, yet only 40% had completed a matric. This was possible because until early 1990s the former National Teachers Training College, now the Lesotho College for Educators, accepted students who did not complete high school as long as they had a junior certificate¹⁷ and some experience in the teaching profession. This has changed and now they could only be accepted at this college when they had successfully passed their matric. All permanent female teachers were entitled to a three months maternity leave (Teaching Service Regulations Act, 1995). This was the case across the schools.

¹⁷ This is equivalent to Grade 10.

5.2.4 Children's Social Lives in the School

Looking around the school during break or lunch time one could see patterns of gendered interactions. Usually girls sat behind the toilet and others girls formed into small groups jumping a rope and singing. Boys scattered in the playground and engaged in different kinds of activities. For instance, a few sat near the boys' toilet and played *moraba-raba* (traditional male game). Others gathered far at the end corner, sat with their faces looking down (just the way initiates from the traditional circumcision schools sit) and sang traditional circumcision songs. The data below illustrates:

All teachers except one have gone to attend the national census workshop. Children are playing in the schoolyard. As normal, boys have gathered near the toilet to play *moraba-raba*. They run to open the gate for me as always. Far at the field, though still within the school yard, some boys are sitting down in a group with their faces looking down. They are singing a traditional circumcision song. I could identify with the song. Girls are curiously gathered at a distance. They want to move closer but one boy is watching them. As they moved closer he throws stones at them, chasing them a little bit. I could hear the song; it is about one of the legendary Basotho fairy tales – *Maliepetsane le Limo* (A pretty little girl and the cannibal):

Maliepetsane khalala, thopenyana ea ntate limo ue
He Maliepetsane khalala
Maliepetsane khalala thopenyana ea ntate limo ue
He, khalala, ha ena masale nyatsi ea sehole
Maliepetsane, na ha u bone ntate limo o nyoriloe
He khalala, e se ebile e phela ka ho kalima
Maliepetsane, na ha u bone ntate limo o lapile
He khalala, banana ba heso ke bao ba fihla
Maliepetsane, khalala thopenyana ea ntate limo ue
Ba tuku li tala li ea ba ts'oanela

The English translation reads as thus;

Hey Maliepetsane a pretty girl
Maliepetsane a pretty little girl of father cannibal
Hey Maliepetsane a pretty little girl
Maliepetsane a pretty little girl of father cannibal
Hey it does not have ear rings the lover of a fool
Maliepetsane don't you see father cannibal is thirsty?
Hey a pretty little girl ... it even now depends on borrowing

Maliepetsane don't you see father cannibal is hungry?
Hey a pretty little girl.....the girls of my village there they arrive
Maliepetsane a pretty little girl of father cannibal
Hey beautiful, with green head clothes they look...
Beautiful.....

(Fieldnotes: Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school)

The song presupposed a non-egalitarian heterosexual relationship between the male (father cannibal) and female (Maliepetsane), a pretty little girl. The gender-biased and authoritarian nature of this relationship was illustrated when repeatedly Maliepetsane was not asked to provide food and water for father cannibal but was asked if she did 'not see' that 'father cannibal' needed food and water. This androcentric heterosexual fantasy was reinforced through references to home girls with green 'head clothes' which the song claimed made them heterosexually attractive. The threateningly compulsory and coercive nature of heterosexual relationships was expressed through the analogy of a male as the cannibal (person who eats flesh of other people). Maliepetsane –a 'little' girl connoted the perceived powerlessness of females in heterosexual encounters, while 'pretty' connoted that it was taken for granted that Maliepetsane would not escape the gaze and heterosexual greed of father cannibal.

Undoubtedly, the song was based on patriarchal values that promote asymmetrical power relations between males and females. The traditional circumcision schools where this song came from were known to teach and encourage boys to adhere to the traditional values of the Basotho culture. Traditional Basotho values did not only encourage gender inequality but they

were founded on inequitable relations between males and females. This affirmed the claim this study made (see chapter 1) that poems and songs within Basotho communities tended to portray males' heroism and superiority through denigrating images of females.

On the other hand, girls engaged in their own activities.

Some girls were also singing, dancing to the rhythm, forming into groups and dispersing suddenly bursting into laughter and throwing a ball:

Saule, Saule, Saule Saule was a gentleman
I say one [going one by one]
Saule, Saule Saule Saule was a gentleman
I say two [pairing into groups of two by two]
Saule, Saule Saule Saule was gentleman
I say "*ntobole*" (throwing a ball at one girl and suddenly dispersing).

(Fieldnotes: Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school)

Saying "Saule was a gentleman" implies notions of particular masculine behaviour which is regarded as appropriate. Pairing into groups of two by two might denote heterosexual fantasies that girls associated with someone (Saule in this case) who manifest appropriate hegemonic masculinity as a catalyst of heterosexual attraction. Whereas dispersing suddenly and going one by one might denote the fragility of heterosexual relationships, which often affect girls negatively due to pregnancy and HIV and AIDS.

It was not usual to see boys playing with girls. Those who did were normally ridiculed even by some girls as not real boys and were thus excluded from boys' groups. Overall, children spent their social lives in this school with great energy and enthusiasm. Sometimes it was even impossible to make meaning of some of

these activities. Chapter 7 provides a more detailed analysis of children's experiences and performances of gender in the schools.

5.3 MOLALANA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Molalana primary school is located on the left hand side, and in close proximity to the Nelson Mandela road on the way to the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (Katse Dam). It is located within a rural village in the Leribe district which was, during the period of this study, under the chieftaincy of chief Selomi. This village is roughly some 10km from the Hlotse town, towards the foot hills of the Maluti Mountain ranges. The school was established in 1930 by the Lesotho Evangelical Church. Some of the villages where children of this school came from are roughly 8km away from the school, a distance which many girls and boys had to walk to and from school everyday.

Traditional male circumcision schools were conducted in the villages surrounding the school. It was reported that these schools affected boys' attendance in the school. About three boys dropped out of school from January 2006 to September 2006 to attend traditional circumcision schools. The school did not have a policy to exclude boys from traditional circumcision schools. Yet it was reported that almost all boys who went never returned to continue with their studies in this school. It appeared that traditional circumcision schools in communities surrounding Molalana primary school did not support FPE on its objective to ensure that children attended and completed basic schooling. More research is

needed to unearth dynamics within traditional circumcision schools which inhibit boys from getting back to school. This would help unveil strategies that could be employed to ensure that boys who attended traditional circumcision schools continue with formal schooling.

Girls' traditional initiation was also practiced in this region but did not have a significant impact on girls in the school. There was no girl in this school who had attended girls' initiation. However, pregnancy was rife in the school. About five girls fell pregnant between the middle of 2005 and September 2006. The practice of expelling girls who were pregnant from this school was stopped after a girl whom teachers suspected to be pregnant allegedly performed an abortion after she was expelled. Her parents sued the school for expelling their innocent daughter and defaming her name. The school resolved to stop expelling pregnant girls as a result. As this was the case with Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school, most girls who fell pregnant still chose to stop coming to school once their pregnancy was noticeable. A small number of children came from other denominations such as the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church of Lesotho. The majority of them came from the Lesotho Evangelical Church denomination. In 2006 the school had an enrolment of seven hundred children (273 boys and 427 girls).

5.3.1 The school's Environment

The school was surrounded by an old fence which allowed people in the nearby village to walk across the school yard. Access by car was only possible through one main entrance from the main road which did not have a gate. For visitors like me, parking was available in the form of an open space just after the main entrance. Except during parents meetings there were normally no cars that were parked in that area. The school did not have a hall and morning assemblies were held in this open area. During morning assembly children gathered in this space and stood in rows according to their classes with girls standing in front and behind, boys in all classes.

The classrooms in this school were built in brick and corrugated iron sheets with a total number of 13 classrooms. There was no staff room for teachers in the school. The principal had a small office which had only a chair and a table. She used this office mostly to talk to visitors and to hold staff and School Governing Body meetings. Teachers used their own classrooms for keeping teaching and learning materials. There was no school tuck shop and teachers sent children to buy snacks in a nearby Chinese-owned shop outside the school yard.

The school did not have electricity. It used a tap as a means of water supply. The following data illustrates some of the implications caused by the absence of electricity in this school:

I came to this school to leave some questionnaires for teachers who were not present in the previous day when I gave out the questionnaires. When I arrived I was met by the Standard 2 teacher (Mrs Mantoa) – the oldest teacher in the

school. She wanted clarity on the questionnaire. She asked me to explain what I meant by the source of power in the school. As I explained she laughed at me and said, “Hey your question is difficult you know. We don’t have any source of power in the school. When the weather is cloudy or the storm is coming, the classrooms get dark and we just sit down, fold our arms and ask children to tell fairy tales¹⁸”.

(Fieldnotes: Molalana primary school)

This meant that the absence of electricity compromised the quality of teaching and learning in this school. Proper teaching and learning was only possible during sunny days. Girls’ and boys’ education was invariably adversely affected by this condition. The implications of this effect might still reinforce the broader gender inequality in these communities. This study views high quality education that girls and boys receive in schools as a means through which we might mitigate, challenge and possibly challenge unequal gender relations within schools and the broader society. As such, provision of adequate basic resources such as electricity is vital for effective implementation of FPE, and improvement of gender equality in the schools.

Teachers and children in the school used pit latrines which were located within the school yard. Toilets for girls and boys were located far from each other with teachers toilets located in the middle. The physical separation of boys’ and girls’

¹⁸ Fairy tales are part of the Basotho culture. They are normally narrated by elderly people to children at night when they gathered round a glowing fire in a traditional Basotho hut. Children are also asked to narrate these stories. This is meant to train and practice their remembering (memory) ability. Such stories are usually based on fictions and imaginary stories of animals impersonated as human beings. There is a superstition that if one tells fairy tales during the day she/he will grow horns on the head. This serves to discourage narration of these stories at day time. During cloudy weather the classrooms at Molalana primary school became so dark that it really looked like it was at night. Thus narrating fairy tales during cloudy weather was, indeed, not ironic.

toilets denoted a structural division which formed boys and girls into two categories. Such categorization promoted divisions between the two genders. It also reinforced or demonstrated lack of trust which further encouraged social division based on gender. This thesis argues that it was on the basis of such divisions that inequitable gender relations in the schools were formed (see chapter 7).

5.3.2 Parents

Most fathers of children attending this school worked in the South African mines. As such, most children were staying in female headed households. This was so because it was still a trend that only men (fathers) worked in these mines. Those who had been retrenched from the mines still depended on migrant remittances whether in the form of pensions or retrenchment packages. Many of the mothers worked in Chinese-owned firms to earn a living. They only earned a meagre wage for subsistence. These mothers commuted everyday to these firms which were (in Maputsoe town) roughly 80 kilometres away from these communities. They used public transport for this purpose. It was believed that Basotho women were employed in Chinese-owned firms because of their docility and susceptibility to exploitation.

The fact that most of these women had families and children to look after (particularly in the absence of their husbands) placed them in a situation of high demand for some means of survival. As such, some of these families engaged in

subsistence farming and rearing of animals in order to supplement the little they received from other means of remittances. Yet these high survival demands for most female parents to work and provide for their families always competed with the need for them to undertake domestic labour.

5.3.3 Teachers' Profile

There were 13 permanent teachers including the principal, Mrs. Makara who was a member of the Lesotho Evangelical Church, and three para-professional teachers at Molalana primary school. All teachers in this school were females and lived in the surrounding areas except the principal who lived in Hlotse town.

Table 5.2 below illustrates teacher demographics in this school.

N=16

| Age | | No. |
|--|-----------------|------------|
| | Between 21 -30 | 7 |
| | Between 31 - 40 | 1 |
| | Between 41 -50 | 3 |
| | Between 51 - 60 | 4 |
| | Over 70 | 1 |
| Gender | | |
| | Male | 0 |
| | Female | 16 |
| Academic qualifications | Passed Matric | 3 |
| Professional/teacher qualifications | | |
| • No Teaching Qualifications | | 5 |
| • Primary Teacher Certificate | PTC | 3 |

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|------|
| • Diploma in Teacher Education | DTE | 5 |
| • Bachelors Degree in Education | B. Ed | 1 |
| Teaching Experience | | |
| | Less than One Year | 3 |
| | From 1 - 5 | 5 |
| | From 6 – 10 | 2 |
| | From 11- 15 | 0 |
| | From 16 and Above | 6 |
| Average Teacher: Pupil Ratio | | 1:54 |

Table 5.2 illustrates that all teachers in this schools were within the normal teaching age except one teacher who was above 65 – legal pensionable¹⁹ age, as per the Teaching Service Regulations Act of 1995. More that 50% had formal teaching qualifications and about 12%, excluding the three para-professional teachers, had no formal teaching qualifications. More than 50% of them had been teaching for more than five years. It would be expected that the school operated in a way that promoted gender equality as all teachers were women. However, as shown later, teachers in this school adhered to, and continued to reinforce traditional gender stereotypes that mostly militated against girls and women (see chapter 6).

¹⁹ According the Teaching Service Regulation Act, 1995 the pensionable age for teachers is 65. From the age of 55 a teacher may voluntarily apply to take pension. But once they reach the age of 65 it is mandatory that they take pension. Yet *de facto*, particularly in the rural areas where there is high demand for teachers, especially after the inception of FPE, teachers continue to teach beyond this age as long as they are in good health. Such a decision is normally considered at the school level.

5.3.4 Children's Social Lives in the School

The school was famous for choral music. In 2005 it won three prestigious trophies, and was ordained the best primary school in choral music in the entire Leribe district. During lunch time children who sang for the school choir normally gathered in one classroom with all teachers to rehearse as there was going to be a competition in Maseru (capital city of Lesotho) some time in October that year. The principal, who was the conductor, was responsible for training and preparing the school choir. Girls occupied the front rows and boys the back rows. Below is an illustration of one song that the school choir rehearsed. I could clearly identify the song. Perhaps this was partly because we also sang the same song in my primary school when I was young:

Jesu seli laka u nthuse ka lihlomo tsa moea
Kettle ke tsebe ho loana ntoa e thata ea lefats'e.
Oho Jesu ke ts'epile uena, ho ntoanela
Hore u nthuse ka lihlomo tsa moea
Ha sera se nteka, se nteka ha bohloko-hloko
Oho Jesu ke ts'epile uena
Hore u mphe matla
U nthuse ka lihlomo tsa moea

The English translation reads thus;

God my lord and my light, please assist me with spiritual armours
So I could win a hard war of the earth
When the enemy troubles me
When the enemy troubles me so much
Oh lord I look on to you
Oh lord I trust onto you
To give strength
To fight for me
To help me with spiritual armours

(Fieldnotes: Molalana primary school)

The spiritual inspiration of this song was felt around the school as mostly girls sang and chanted the song and quietly danced to its rhythmic tunes in small

groups during lunch, break and playtime. The song was really fascinating and sometimes I found myself devotedly humming the song as I drove home from this school. But in my case I was asking God to assist me with spiritual and intellectual armours so I could win the hard battle for a PhD.

Inside the classrooms boys were usually seated in the front rows. The standard 7 teacher told me that it was because they (boys) were troublesome and that if they sat in the back rows it was difficult for her to control them. Girls and boys in this school were encouraged to not use chemicals on their hair. Girls in particular were prohibited from using make-up or using facial creams and wearing finger or ear rings. Many girls were unhappy with these regulations. In fact, one way that girls in this school identified with me and were willing to freely share more stories with me was a rumour that, as one girl reported:

Bonang: sir they said you want to know what we like and don't like so that you can tell the government about how teachers treat us in the school.....please tell them that we [girls] are unhappy that we are not allowed to wear ear-rings, make-up and the stuff....

This denoted that the gender-biased rules of the school made girls in particular unhappy. In adhering to such rules, girls had to compromise their values so that they could be accepted in the school. For instance, girls did not wear make-up and earrings and so forth, particularly in the presence of teachers (during formal schooling encounters). During informal schooling processes like when children play in the school yard (where there were no teachers) girls secretly wore make-up and put on their ear-rings. Besides, girls remained positive that such rules could be challenged and possibly changed. That was why Bonang shared the

rumour that possibly made girls happy and willing to cooperate in my research. This optimism might account for the inventive and subversive behaviour that girls in particular demonstrated to challenge gender biased operations and regulations of the school as illustrated in chapter 7. The study argues that such inventiveness is a source of agency that could be harnessed to strategise for gender equality in the primary schools.

5.4 MALOALENG PRIMARY SCHOOL

Maloaleng primary school is located about 6km from a government hospital. The school was established around 1918 – 1920 under the proprietorship of Anglican Church of Lesotho. Originally the school was located near a big Anglican church in Hlotse town. This place was near the road and parents were reluctant to send their children to the school because of car accidents. In 1992 the school was moved to a remote valley as a counter measure against the problem of car accidents.

This place is roughly 5km from a village which was under the chieftaincy of chief Molapo. The school's close proximity to Hlotse camp might be the reason why the acting principal rejected being labelled as a rural school. Children from this school came from a variety of family backgrounds. While a few came from households that were financially managing well the majority came from very poor households. Many children had lost one or both parents allegedly due to HIV and AIDS. During the time of this study two children collapsed in the morning

assembly. Teachers suspected, and later the children themselves revealed that they had spent days without food. Both of these incidents happened on Monday mornings suggesting that such children might have had their last meal the previous Friday when they were at school, thanks to the FPE feeding scheme.

The school had a problem in recruiting principals that the church authorities wanted. From 1992 there had been five different principals who took on the school principalship. Some teachers were not happy about how leadership of the school was being handled by the church authorities. Parents also complained about fights that took place between teachers and principals in this school. Thus the roll of the school declined as parents pulled out their children from the school. At the time of this study there were 360 (153 boys and 207 girls) children as compared to 810 children that enrolled in this school in 1990.

Cases of pregnancy were rare in the school. In 2004 two Standard 7 girls got pregnant. It was alleged that these girls were impregnated by people from outside the school. Girls who fell pregnant, especially those who were doing Standard 7, were allowed to write their final examination in this school. It was not clear what the school policy was on this issue when it affected other girls. Since such incidents were rare the school did not have a formal position about how to handle the issue of girls who fell pregnant. However, it was reported that such girls never came back to write their examinations. Teachers thought that girls felt

shy after they fell pregnant given the stigma attached to pregnant girls in the school.

Male circumcision schools were still being conducted in some villages where children attending this school came from. Many boys left school to attend circumcision schools but during the time of my research no boy left school for this reason. However, it was expected that many would leave towards the end of the year when summer began as there was a newly opened circumcision school in a nearby village. Since the inception of FPE absenteeism was rife in the school. Teachers blamed parents for not taking responsibility to ensure that their children attended school. They claimed that since parents do not pay school fees because of FPE, they do not take seriously the point of ensuring that their children attend school.

5.4.1 The School's Environment

The school was surrounded by an old fence which allowed movement into the school from different directions when walking. Access by car was only possible through one main entrance from the main road which did not have a gate. A small parking area was available in the middle space where children normally gathered for morning assembly. This took the form of a traffic cycle making it easy for a car to get out of the school yard.

The classrooms were built in brick and corrugated iron sheets with a total number of 10 classrooms. About three classrooms were not used during the lessons. There was no staff room for teachers and the principal had a small office located behind the classrooms. This office was normally not in use as the principal spent most of the time with her Standard 4 children teaching. The School Governing Body and staff meetings were held in one of the empty classrooms. Teachers used their own classrooms which had mostly broken lockers for keeping teaching and learning materials. There was no school tuck shop and shops were located some 3km away from the school. Teachers sent children, especially girls to buy snacks for them. During morning assembly children stood in rows according to their classes with girls standing in front and boys behind.

The school did not have electricity. It used a tap as a means of water supply. Teachers and children used pit latrine toilets which were located within the school yard.

5.4.2 Parents

Mothers of learners in this school were not employed. They made a living by selling fruits, traditional beer brewing, cooking and selling food and fat cakes as well as sweets at a nearby taxi rank. Some earned a living by washing clothes for the slightly more affluent families. This was peculiar to this school. Perhaps it was due to the close proximity of some villages where parents of children in the school lived to Hlotse town. In this town there were middle class families who

worked in the district education office, police station, administrative offices, local bank and government hospital. However, many of these middle class families did not send their children to this school. There were better resourced schools in the nearby communities where these families sent their children. Some of these schools were not implementing FPE, as it is not compulsory for all primary schools in Lesotho to implement this policy.

The study noted that the work that most mothers did for subsistence tended to be an extension of their (women's) traditional domestic chores. Women also tended to keep their means of subsistence as close to home as possible due to constraints of child care and agricultural responsibilities. A few fathers were still working in the mines, while some worked in the brick firms (small privately owned firms) in the nearby villages. The fact that most parents in this school were economically deprived was evident in the type of clothes and shoes that some children in the school wore. Some children came to school bare-foot in the ice-cold winters of Lesotho. Occasionally, parents were asked to donate any clothes or shoes to the school with the purpose of giving these items to the needy children. In conjunction with the district education office, the school ran some fund raising campaigns aimed at mitigating the effects of poverty in the school. Some parents worked cooperatively to assist teachers to collect donations from surrounding communities.

5.4.3 Teachers' Profile

At the beginning of 2006 there were seven permanent teachers in all at Maloaleng primary school, including the acting principal Mrs Kojana, a member of the Anglican Church of Lesotho. There was one intern teacher²⁰ from the Lesotho College of Education who joined the school from January 2006. Her internship ended in June 2006. In July 2006 a new female teacher (also a member of the Anglican Church of Lesotho) was employed to teach and also to become the principal. This increased the total number of permanent teachers to eight. All teachers in this school were females except one male teacher who had been in the school since 2001. Most teachers lived in surrounding areas and walked to school everyday.

Table 5.3 below illustrates teacher demographics in this school:

N=8

| Age | | No. |
|--|-----------------|------------|
| | Between 21 -30 | 1 |
| | Between 31 - 40 | 2 |
| | Between 41 -50 | 4 |
| | Between 51 - 60 | 1 |
| Gender | | |
| | Male | 1 |
| | Female | 7 |
| Academic qualifications | Passed Matric | 8 |
| Professional/teacher qualifications | | |

²⁰ Student teachers at the Lesotho College for Education are required to spend six months in the schools as part of their internship programme. The intern teacher was a student in this college.

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|------|
| • No Formal Teaching Qualifications | | |
| • Primary Teacher Certificate | PTC | 3 |
| • Diploma in Teacher Education | DTE | 4 |
| • Bachelors Degree in Education | B. Ed | 1 |
| Teaching Experience | | |
| | Less than One Year | 0 |
| | From 1 - 5 | 1 |
| | From 6 -10 | 0 |
| | From 11 – 15 | 3 |
| | From 15 and Above | 4 |
| Average Teacher: Pupil Ratio | | 1:50 |

Table 5.3 illustrates that all teachers in this school had passed their matric and that they all had formal teaching qualifications except one intern teacher. All of them were below the pensionable age of 65 and more than 80% of them had more than ten years teaching experience. The conflicts that most teachers had with the acting principal reinforced traditional gender stereotypes that construct women as poor leaders who should not be allowed to head institutions. The male teacher in this school used these conflicts as exemplars to substantiate his perceptions and attitudes against the FPE's move to improve gender equality in the primary schools (see chapter 6).

5.4.4 Children's Social Lives in the School

During break time children formed into small groups, boys normally playing 'marbles' or 'spin' (tossing a coin others guess if it was 'head' or 'tail') betting with money. In separate groups, girls played a ball throwing game (*mokou*) or

cheko (traditional girls' game where girls take turns leaping with one leg and pushing a small stone into various boxes drawn on the ground). Once the bell rang for lunch and cooks had arrived boys normally ran to the area where the food was served. When they arrived they pushed and fought each other, everyone wanting to be in front so they could be the first ones to get the meal.

Teachers responsible for respective classes would soon call for their attention:

Okay children [usually shouting] lets pray for the food. [Then children would bow their heads and all pray, loudly]: Thank you father for the food we are going to eat, and remember those who have nothing to eat, Amen!

(Fieldnotes: Maloaleng primary school)

This prayer was, indeed, touching, particularly because in communities surrounding the school, some children had nothing to eat including those who attended in this school. The FPE feeding scheme ensured that every child in the school had at least one decent meal every school day.

Inside the classrooms the desks were arranged in rows and columns (traditional style). This was a trend across the schools. Children sat in pairs sharing a desk. Normally a girl shared with a girl and the same with boys. The data below illustrates some regular observations:

It's Friday today. I enter into class 7 and quickly squeeze myself on a small seat at the back just before the lesson begins. I know the teacher does not like this. She wants me to sit on her chair in front of the class. I always had my way to get around this and perhaps she is now getting used to it [I look down so she won't start to call me]. Once she starts teaching I look carefully around the classroom. As usual some girls have their hair neatly braided. Some are wearing ear-rings and finger-rings. I can see that girl wearing a finger-ring with the shape of a heart – I love you. Some have 'relaxed' their hair; it's looking long and beautiful. This was not allowed at Molalana and Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary schools, but in this school girls even put on make-up. Perhaps it was the reason why teachers and the principal in this school classified themselves not as a rural school. I looked at a

girl next to me with a light eye brow and nice ear-ring. To top it up, she has even sparkled her face with small glistening crystals.

(Fieldnotes: Maloaleng primary school)

It appeared that to be a good girl in this school one must wear make-up, braid and 'relax'²¹ the hair. Beautifying themselves was, indeed, one way girls in this school performed and celebrated their girlhood (femininity). Girls' dress code was the only thing that made this school distinct from the other two schools. Perhaps this was linked to fact that the school rejected to be labelled a rural school. I knew that girls at Molalana primary school were quite unhappy that they were not allowed to put on ear-rings, as if to suggest that the rules that prevented them from expressing their girlhood in this way were indeed against the very essence of femininity as a self-governing human virtue. A clear gender division was also visible in this classroom. Boys normally wore big size trousers and sometimes had their hair not combed. This was perhaps related to dominant constructions of gender which put only women (and girls) under pressure to look heterosexually beautiful²².

5.5 CONCLUSION

The chapter provided a descriptive analysis of the schools under study. All three schools were originally established by church authorities with the purpose of

²¹ This is a local term used to describe the hair that has been beautified by straightening it. This is done by the use of chemicals. In contemporary society this is usually done at the 'hair salons'. Girls in this school normally did this at their homes.

²² According to these constructions, when a man is 'ugly', he is referred to as 'cruel'. People are normally fearful of cruel persons. This provides a leeway for men (boys) who are regarded as ugly to exercise domination over women (girls). So the reason why boys in the school wore huge size trousers and never comb their hair might be a way through which they wanted to look ugly (cruel) so they could exercise control and domination over girls, and possibly over other boys.

propagating and instilling Christian values in the surrounding communities. The schools had distinct histories and they were established at different times. The majority of teachers, children and parents who were actively involved in the schools were females. Church denomination did not seem to have much influence in how the schools constructed gender, except that girls at Maloaleng primary school (from the Anglican Church of Lesotho) were not prohibited from 'relaxing' and knitting their hair as well as putting on finger and ear-rings. Many standard 7 girls in this school had different hair styles and pretty jewellery. This was surprising given high levels of poverty in communities and families from which most these children were coming. Such behaviour was not allowed in the other schools (Molalana and Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary schools). It appears that these two schools from the Lesotho Evangelical Church were more controlling on the dress code, especially for girls.

Being a religious member of the church which established the school was more important in these schools. As a result, the schools endeavoured to ensure that the positions of principal were occupied by teachers who were members of the church that established the school. All such positions were held by women. Yet they continued to promote dominant and often stereotypic constructions of gender in how they managed the schools. Dominant constructions of gender were found to be the main principles for deciding on the social formations, roles and chores that boys and girls were encouraged to undertake. Such stereotypic

constructions of gender were the basis for the reproduction of gender inequality in the schools.

Across the three schools, boys seemed to enjoy relatively similar privileges of dominance. They occupied a large amount of space in the playgrounds and freedom to play on their own without teachers' surveillance and control. The exception was at Molalana primary school where boys were made to sit in the front rows of their classroom as a means to institute control and discipline. At Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school boys who were from traditional circumcision schools were not allowed to continue their studies in the school. The study contends that such exclusionary strategies of instituting discipline might breed other forms of indiscipline. For instance, boys from traditional circumcision schools might intimidate children, particularly girls, on their way to and from the schools. This was a serious potential threat in the contexts of these schools where children travelled long distances to school. Some children might have recourse to stop attending school as a result. So denying boys from traditional circumcision schools the opportunity to attend schools only served to place such boys beyond reproach. Such boys might continue to behave in ways that affect children in the schools in contexts where it was difficult to reprimand them.

Again, at Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school only girls were expelled from school if they fell pregnant. Boys who were involved in such incidents were not made to be accountable in any way. Expelling pregnant girls from school was antithetical to

the aspirations of the FPE policy. As described in chapter 1, this policy sought to ensure that all children attend and complete their basic education (Ministry of Education, 2005). Molalana and Maloaleng primary schools had revised the policy of expelling girls who fell pregnant. Yet girls who fell pregnant decided to stop coming to school once their pregnancy became noticeable. This was mainly due to the stigma that schools attached to pregnant girls which made them uncomfortable to continue their studies. It appears that changing the written school policies only was not enough to encourage pregnant girls to continue to attend school. This also needed change in how the schools perceived pregnant girls and overall commitment by all the stakeholders to support and remove all obstacles, including their negative attitudes towards pregnant girls. The absence of the national policy on schoolgirls' pregnancy and on school re-entry for adolescent mothers to support FPE meant that there was no regulation to protect such girls.

The prevalent traditional circumcision schools also served to discourage boys from continuing their schooling. However, this did not seem to change boys' status later in life relative to girls. In chapter 1, the study illustrated that because of the social and cultural inferiority accorded to females (girls and women) within Basotho communities men continued to hold important decision-making positions (Women & Law in Southern Africa, 1998). This was so despite their (men's) relatively lesser education as compared to women. Yet girls who never attended school were likely to be consigned to lower tiers of the patriarchal order of

Basotho society. Such girls were normally faced with more adverse conditions compared to girls who attended schools or boys who did not attend school. The study found that it was thus relatively less of a problem for a boy to stop attending school than for girls within Basotho communities. This might explain the general low academic performance of boys as compared to girls in these schools. The broader patterns of social, cultural and economic inequalities which tended to militate against women than men within these communities might incite this phenomenon. Hence the unusual pattern of having more girls than boys in schools as compared to other African countries and more educated females than males in the larger society. Either way, factors of male circumcision and girls' pregnancy adversely affected children in the schools on the basis of their gender. The schools must develop strategies to deal with these issues in the interest of gender equality.

Once children are in school, mechanisms to retain them and ensure that they develop to their full potential must be put in place. Yet the practice of separating boys and girls, for instance, during morning assembly had a negative impact on gender equality in the schools. This conformed to patriarchal notions which aspire to put females (girls) under close surveillance as a means to exert power and control. It could also limit girls' opportunities to explore their full potential for fear of being ridiculed if they were seen doing things that challenged dominant constructions of gender in the schools. As a result, children tended to organise their social interactions along gender lines. They also engaged in song and

behaviour patterns that fostered dominant and often stereotypic constructions of gender that promoted unequal relations between girls and boys. Conversely, there was an intrinsic willingness particularly amongst the girls to challenge prevailing gender-biased social categories, rules and regulations under which the schools operated. This provided a basis on which to ground strategies for gender equality and conditions under which schools/communities must operate in order to promote gender equality (I return to these issues in chapter 7).

The next chapter presents findings from this study and illustrates how parents' and teachers' perceptions of gender mainly reinforced inequitable social categories/relations of gender in the schools.

CHAPTER 6

PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER: PARENTS' AND TEACHERS' VIEWS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter discusses parents' and teachers' perceptions of gender. These perceptions of gender had implications on gender in/equality in the schools. For instance, how these stakeholders perceived gender had a huge influence on what they encouraged or discouraged girls and boys to be or do in the schools/communities, not least because children in the study were mostly either in the custody of their parents at home or that of teachers while at school. So, parents' and teachers' perceptions of gender played a significant role in shaping and regulating children's experiences as well as children's meanings of gender (see chapter 7).

The purpose of this chapter is to unveil the role that parents and teachers played to challenge/reinforce gender inequality in the schools. It reveals various discursive spheres of influence within the contexts where the study was undertaken which informed ways in which parents and teachers perceived gender. I refer to these spheres of influence as 'discursive constructs'. The study identified 'discursive constructs' as socially organised and shared 'knoweldges' or means of 'knowing' which parents and teachers used to construct (make

meaning/sense of) gender. In other words, these were communally shared assumptions that underlie parents' and teachers' perceptions of gender. They were linked to the use of power, which created and set limits to the "truths" by which parents and teachers made meanings of gender (Drake & Owen, 1998, p.17). Parents and teachers invariably used 'discursive constructs' as some kind of moral/ethical recourse upon which their perceptions of gender were founded. Generally, these were:

- Providence and God's will
- Child-Adult relations
- Naturalness of gender differences
- Human rights and abilities
- Naturalness of gender attributes
- Culture
- Pedagogic imperative for gender-based differentiation

The importance of arranging parents' and teachers' perceptions of gender into distinctive 'discursive constructs' was to make explicit the issues that needed to be tackled in schools/communities under study in order to address gender inequality. Through critical analysis of parents' and teachers' perceptions of gender and 'discursive constructs' that influenced these perceptions, the chapter identifies implications for gender in/equality in these schools/communities. It also suggests some solutions to the dilemmas raised. The chapter draws mainly from

semi-structured interviews (particularly for parents' views), unstructured interviews, informal conversations and observations (for teachers' views).

Furthermore, how parents and teachers perceived gender was intricately intertwined with their notions of gender equality in the primary schools. In a sense, their perceptions of gender tended to centre significantly also on what they perceived to be the benefits and challenges of gender equality in the schools. As a result, sometimes it was not easy to separate how parents and teachers perceived gender from how they perceived gender equality in the primary schools. Such dialectical relationships between gender and gender equality might be informed by widespread knowledge in these schools and communities that some of the FPE's objectives were to address gender inequality in the schools.

6.2 PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER

6.2.1 Providence and God's will

Gender as a sacred God-given attribute was common in how parents perceived gender. This informed stereotypic imagination of relationships between men and women, which parents believed were ordained by providence. They perceived division of chores and responsibilities along gender lines as a result of decree by celestial intervention. In other words, they perceived the division of human attributes into masculine and feminine as a heavenly intervention from God meant to regulate how human species must operate/relate. For instance, when

asked if she supported the move by FPE to try to improve gender equality in the schools, Mrs Lesotho gave the following response:

*Ntate*²³ we support gender equality to be done in the school, but for me I don't like it only when it takes away the power that a person got from God. And that is like that *ntate*, and it's the thing [gender equality] that destroys many families. I tell you even if we do the same things with my husband, there is that something that makes him more superior. So you think we can just think this [power] comes from nothing or this power comes from God?

(Mrs Lesotho: Tsuoe-Tsuoe Primary school)

It was not surprising that parents used the construct of God to express their perceptions of gender. As it was mentioned in chapter 5 the schools where the study was based were all established by church authorities in order to propagate Christian values. Christianity and the supremacy of God as the provider of all things on earth was a pervasive ideology in these communities/schools. Even within families which still adhered to traditional Basotho culture, perceptions of God and providence continued to embrace fundamental values of Christianity. Influenced by patriarchal ideology, such traditional families still upheld (father) God as the creator and governor of the entire universe. Therefore, parents' perceptions of gender as a God ascribed attribute drew from both traditional Basotho beliefs systems and Christianity as introduced by the first French and Roman Catholic missionaries who came to Lesotho (see chapter 1). As discussed later in this chapter, Basotho culture holds in high esteem the supremacy of males, as is the case with Christianity.

²³ *Ntate* is used to mean father. This does not necessarily refer to the biological father. Within the context of Basotho society the term is normally used as symbol of respect. It is used more or less like the term sir in the case of English language.

Consequently, parents believed that it was natural for boys and girls to divide chores according to their gender. They believed that 'sharing' chores and responsibilities according to gender was a marker of what each one of us was meant to do and be in order to fulfil our purpose of being in this world. As such, some of them did not even view gender equality in terms of allowing boys and girls to develop to their best human potentialities. Instead, they viewed gender equality as the ability for girls and boys to adhere to the gender-biased sharing of chores and responsibilities, as such was providence. One parent's comment illustrated:

I don't know may be it's me who does not understand gender equality, but I thought it means that we share the work in the family not that everyone does what they liked. And if we share things equally, like my husband does something and I do something to support the family. As a woman [I cannot] say my husband doesn't have a say, [or that he] cannot ask me where I come from, no I think really a woman and a man cannot be the same. A man will always be the head [and] a woman will always be a woman [meaning what defines being a woman is not being the head].

(Mrs Sephea: Maloaleng Primary school)

The question of allocating chores according to gender had currency in how a traditional family was, according to God, expected to function. What was obscured in Mrs Sephea's claim of sharing of the responsibilities was the nature of differences between the responsibilities shouldered by men and women. Her perception seemed to condone the inherent inequitable gendered power relations that such gender segregated responsibilities forged. A dimension of such inequitable power relations was exemplified when Mrs Sephea accepted that, "a man will always be the head". This denoted that sharing of the family chores and responsibilities did not necessarily equate to gender equality. Her assertion that,

“a woman will always be a woman” demonstrated how Mrs Sephea perceived gender as a static and incontestable human attribute. Such perception left no room for changing the inequitable gender relations in the communities/schools. Viewing masculine and feminine attributes as natural and intrinsic (God ordained) fundamentally contributed to the belief that these attributes were incontestable (I return to some of these issues in subsections 6.2.3 and 6.3.1 below).

Yet the ‘construct’ of God has been sharply criticised as a moral imperative that continues to foster and reproduce gender inequality in our society (Day, 1985; Inglehart & Norris, 2003). These authors contend that this serves to consolidate patriarchy (exercise of power through father head). The sentiments of Inglehart and Norris (2003) are illustrative:

God has functioned as one of the most important agencies of [gender] socialisation determining societal norms and moral values with regard to gender in all societies.

(Inglehart & Norris, 2003, p.50)

Within Basotho communities the ‘construct’ of God presented such an intricate ethical value that governed the norms and standards of behaviour. These communities tended to uphold patriarchy, for instance, through the concept of an ‘heir’, immovable property entitlement to men and so forth (see chapter 2). It was no surprise that parents perceived gender through the lens of this construct. Thus we learn, for certain, that parents’ role to challenge and possibly change existing gender inequality in the schools was minimal. The above data has illustrated how the ‘discursive construct’, of God and providence was founded and operated on gender inequitable basis. The schools under study were all

founded to advance Christianity. They all operated in the context of pervasive patriarchal ideology. This might explain why gender inequality was so deeply entrenched in these schools.

6.2.2 Child-Adult Relations

The discursive construct of child-adult relations also had much influence on how some parents perceived gender. Parents seemed to confuse the subject of gender with the notion of social seniority based on children's age. Seniority on the basis of age (that is to expect young people to respect older people was an intricate part of Basotho culture), which shaped inequitable power relations between young and old people. Therefore, parents invariably reverted to this when expressing their perceptions of gender. Accordingly, some parents perceived the efforts to improve gender equality through FPE as a threat to their adult authority over children. They also perceived the advent of gender equality through FPE as a potential source of children's indiscipline. For example, when asked to comment on the value of gender equality in the schools and if her school should work to promote gender equality, Mrs Mapalesa gave the following response:

Hey! I don't see gender equality as important because they [children] respect each other. When the small one makes a mistake she [he] does not listen to the older child because she [he] thinks they are the same. So when they [children] know they are not the same they respect each other. I am not happy for the school to have a policy of gender equality [FPE].

(Mrs Mapalesa: Tsuoe-Tsuoe Primary school)

Implied in Mrs Mapalesa's view is the assumption that children respected each other because they thought they were different. Her notion of smaller children having to respect older children illustrated her perception of respect as a 'mono-directional construct' where the younger must respect the older and not the other way round. This perception also implies that respect (particularly children's respect for older people) was based on fear rather than on mutual understanding. Such perception legitimised age difference as an automatic command of respect by the younger to the older without cause for the older to respect the younger. This meant that gender inequality in the schools adversely militated against the younger girls more than any other age or social group. This is because these girls did not have the social and cultural affirmation with regards to gender and their age was also an impediment. This means that they were more likely to be relegated to lower tiers of the inequality continuum within the schools. From this we learn that strategies to address gender inequality in these schools should focus particularly on younger children owing to their heightened levels of vulnerability as a result of their age.

When asked if gender equality should be included as part of the primary schools' curriculum, some parents claimed that such a move might teach young children not to have respect for adults. As illustrated above, it seemed that parents construed respect as a monolithic attribute which the younger or the less powerful must yield to the older or the more powerful. Indeed, their irrevocable

willingness to separate children's and adults' worlds by means of reinforcing current gender inequality was illustrative:

You see *ntate*, it's like gender equality is against the fact that the husband is [a] head [of the family]. Looking at things [of gender equality] it's rather disappointing, and even children that practise gender equality are a shame. You try to talk with your husband and they disrupt you and start to say who is wrong or who is right. So you see gender equality is a problem.

(Mrs Molapo: Molalana Primary school)

The extract above denotes the manner in which parents consolidated the 'adult world' and their authority over children by condoning inequitable relations amongst children. Perhaps, this was born out of fear that children's affirmation through gender equality might also enable children to challenge inequitable relations between children and adults. Yet the interface between age, childhood and gender was seemingly a powerful 'discursive construct' that parents used to regulate gender amongst children as well as to protect their (adults') world from children. Such perceptions meant that children were denied their human potential to engage meaningfully with their social worlds. Denying children to engage in sensible family discussion and decision carries the prospect of limiting children's human potential to take active part on issues that affected them. It is, therefore, possible that such perceptions somewhat inhibited children's active role to determine and negotiate favourable gender relationships in these schools. The study contends that gender equality becomes adversely compromised in contexts where children are restrained from actively taking part to negotiate issues that affect them (I return to this in chapter 7).

Another dynamic where parents linked their children's perceived powerlessness with issues of gender equality is illustrated below:

It's very embarrassing for the husband in the family. You know even if we get the same money but in the families where they practised gender equality, you find a husband being taken like a small child. It's like this thing [gender equality] could have been brought in another way other than by challenging relationships between men and women in the families.

(Mrs Teboho: Molalana primary school)

Mrs Teboho was responding to the question that asked her what she perceived to be the challenges for implementing the FPE policy on gender equality in the schools. Her response reiterated earlier perceptions that viewed a child as the least respected member of the family. The deep-seatedness of patriarchy, which the study argues informed such perceptions, was illustrated when Mrs Teboho claimed that gender equality was incepted to trouble patriarchal relationships between men and women in the families.

In a sense, Mrs Teboho used her fundamental objection to gender equality – which would challenge and possibly change unequal power relations between men and women - as a basis for rejecting the need to infuse equitable relations between girls and boys in schools. From this we learn that addressing patriarchy might help mitigate the current gender inequality in the schools. Another important issue that the above data raised is the interconnectedness between various forms of human inequalities – age and gender. This suggests that in order to address gender inequality we also need to tackle other forms of human inequalities within the schools and in broader society. The data illustrate that gender inequality is intricately linked with other forms of inequality.

6.2.3 Naturalness of Gender Differences

Parents in the three schools perceived gender in terms of what girls and boys liked to do. Their view was that what girls liked to do was intrinsically oppositional to what boys liked to do and vice versa. They claimed that this was often manifested when girls and boys participated in traditional dance and songs. Their perception was that it was a general trend that girls engaged in Basotho traditional dances like *mokhibo* (traditional women's dance) while boys engaged in *mohobelo* (traditional males dance). Perceived intrinsic nature of these habits propelled parents to think that efforts to infuse gender equality in the primary schools (such as inception of FPE) ran the risk of working against nature. They claimed that boys and girls truly enjoyed engaging in different and traditionally gender-based play or games. The subject of attending school was used to illustrate this. For instance, parents claimed that girls liked to go school and that they smiled and were generally happy as they prepared to go to school, whereas boys normally complained about going to school and generally did not like to read or do their homework. According to parents, these inherent differences between boys and girls usually took the form of girls being cooperative and sometimes volunteering to do things that were regarded as important in their communities. One parent explained:

....boys when they grow they will not be able to do things themselves, but girls are always clever, able to wash, serve food, but boys do that because you ask them. But a girl, you would find her washing her clothes and hanging them on the fence, but boys don't unless you ask. That's where I see, they are different in that everyone knows their job already. I always wonder because they do this even before you teach them, like when a girl sees a woman going to fetch water

automatically she takes the bucket and run saying, 'I am going with you to the tap'.

(Mrs Mapalesa: Tsuoe-Tsuoe Primary school)

When asked what she thought might be the differences between boys and girls, another parent illustrated:

You see *ntate*, I don't know much about differences, but I always get nuts with boys. They always play around, driving toy cars, making clay horses and cows, and later when they are tired they asked for food. They don't even say, 'mother can I make food for myself', no they want you to make food for them. I wonder why but I never got the answer. I can see every child have their [predetermined] roles.

(Mrs Mathabo: Maloaleng Primary school)

This discursive construct that boys and girls had intrinsic differences which predetermined their chores and roles in society meant that parents socialised boys and girls into separate social groups. Of major concern for gender equality are the types of roles and chores that such perceptions appropriate as suitable for girls and boys respectively. We must also question what such roles imply for the autonomy and well-being as well as power relations that they forge between girls and boys. It becomes apparent from the above extract that boys enjoy the privilege to demand that their mothers perform domestic chores on their behalf. This was not the case with girls who were perceived to like to do (domestic) chores. Such perceptions of gender have the potential to inequitably limit the amount of time girls enjoyed to play and to do their homework while in the guardianship of parents at home.

Yet boys' resistance to attend school might be linked to wider gender inequality in these communities. As explained in chapter 1, within Basotho communities males continued to enjoy high social, economic and cultural capital even though they are relatively less educated than their female counterparts. Yet for females, education is the only instrument to earn, albeit relatively low, social status and some reasonable means of subsistence (c/f. chapter 5). Perhaps this is the reason why generally girls cooperate and were willing to attend school as opposed to boys.

Such perceptions were normally informed by assumptions that girls and boys become what they are as a result of biological heredity. Indeed, in this world there is a perceived inevitability to classify human species consistently and reliably. This might account for the reason why parents perceived differences between girls and boys as inherent so as to achieve the stability and consistency in their classification. Such biologically determined perceptions allocate girls and boys into rigid social categories which undermined aptitudes for girls and boys to perform gender beyond preconceived gender boundaries. These rigid social categories assume that boys and girls are born into a preconceived world where their actions, potentialities and aptitudes are predetermined on the basis of their genitals. As stated above, such perceptions provide no alternatives for redressing inequitable gender relations in our society, especially in the primary schools.

Yet, sociologists (Weedon, 1997; Connell, 1993) have advanced persuasive arguments against biological determinism as a basis for constructing gender differences. Central to these arguments is the construction of gender as a socially constructed phenomenon. Thus, by critically analysing the social processes that formed girls and boys into separate and hierarchical categories we might begin to understand how girls and boys come to be gendered. Such analysis might also explicate vantage points in these social processes which could be harnessed to challenge and redress inequalities amongst and between boys and girls in the primary schools.

6.2.4 Human Rights and Abilities

Human rights in relation to girls' and boys' abilities, was one of the discursive construct through which parents perceived gender. Parents believed that boys and girls had the right to choose who they wanted to be. They claimed that what boys and girls chose to be was hugely determined by their abilities. These abilities and girls' and boys' willingness to do certain things were central to how these parents perceived of gender in the schools. For instance, they thought that it might not be a good idea to coerce boys and girls do to the same things as a strategy to institute gender equality in the schools. As such, strategies for gender equality should aim at supporting and encouraging boys and girls to develop to their best potential in what they were able to do. The sentiments below illustrate:

..... just like me, in my home three years ago I was able to climb the ladder to mend the roof of the house. But now I feel I cannot and so I would feel very unhappy if I am forced to climb just because of gender equality.

(Mrs Leisa: Molalana Primary school)

This perception meant that we need to unveil specific potentialities of various boys and girls and try to develop them as a means to improve gender equality. Such a view departs from traditional perceptions of gender which tended to polarise girls' and boys' abilities into oppositional attributes. For instance, taking cognisance of children's potentialities means that both girls and boys would be equitably affirmed in the schooling processes. It is also interesting to note that Mrs Leisa made an example of herself undertaking what dominant discourses of gender regarded as a male chore – climbing a ladder to fix the roof of a house. When she said children should be allowed to do what they were able to do, it seems, she did not necessarily refer to the stereotypic gender chores that dominant discourses of gender accorded to boys and girls. Such a view of gender might be useful to aid the FPE's efforts to address inequitable gender relations in the schools.

When asked about some of the challenges confronting gender equality in their schools some parents asserted that children did not have the same physical strengths regardless of whether they were boys or girls. These parents cautioned against perceptions of gender which undermined what they thought were the reality that primary school children were not the same. They claimed that if differences amongst and between boys and girls were not taken into consideration efforts to improve gender equality could be a source of pain and inequality. For instance, to those children who might be forced to do what other

children were doing just because the school was practicing gender equality. Mrs Fako illustrates:

Yes *ntate* the ladies have spoken [.....] But sometimes if I [as a woman] am used to working hard I may have strength that is more than some other men. So I must not be prevented to show my strength just because I am a woman. And I must not be made to do the same things with other people [just] because we are doing gender equality.

(Mrs Fako: Maloaleng Primary school)

The subject of human abilities and potential was invoked when Mrs Fako claimed that the choice of who did what must not be based on gender but rather on what one was able to do. As such, Mrs Fako did not hold the idea that sex should be a determinant for what women and men, girls and boys were allowed and encouraged to do. Such view challenged biologically determined ideas of gender that some parents held. As illustrated, given the same opportunities women could also master chores which were traditionally ordained as males' chores and vice versa. This means that given the opportunity to practice and exposure to things around them, boys and girls might develop abilities to perform duties or activities beyond constricted boundaries inscribed by some dominant and often stereotypic perceptions of gender.

Yet the discursive construct of human rights and abilities based on equal opportunity evoke liberal feminism (Mac Naughton, 1998; Weedon, 1997). As with Mrs Fako's perception, liberal feminism posits that gender equality might be improved by allowing girls and boys to exercise their human rights to freedom of choice. Therefore, the schools must create equitable structural and social

conditions for girls and boys, men and women to take part in the schooling processes. The belief is that, eventually, this might lead to abolition of structural and social categorisation based on gender. This might also lead to an androgynous society in which feminine and masculine qualities are shared and affirmed by all (Alloway, 1995). The criticism laid against this orthodoxy is that it does not account of why boys and girls continue to make choices based on their gender (Epstein, 1995). For instance, in the context of FPE in Lesotho, some boys and girls continued to make choices on the basis of gender. This was so despite the fact that FPE provided for equal opportunities and access to primary schooling. Such choices continued to perpetuate existing gender inequality in the schools (see chapter 7).

This study found that dominant categorisations of gender in the schools were patriarchal. That is males (and masculinities) were prized above females (and femininities). So giving equal opportunities for boys and girls in such contexts might not be effective. This is because what bred gender inequality was not lack of opportunity per se. Instead, it was the social and cultural seniority and value accorded to males (and males' chores) as opposed to females (and females' chores). As such, structural and social processes that categorised girls and boys into this patriarchal order were found to be the archetypes of gender inequality. This normally entailed ascription of arbitrary stereotypic and inequitable attributes to girls and boys so as to predetermine their abilities and aptitudes.

Therefore, gender inequality in these schools might best be addressed by removing stereotypic perceptions of gender as complementary to the provision of equal opportunities. Such a strategy might accelerate constructions of alternative and flexible perceptions of gender affording girls and boys opportunities to develop to their full human potential with the removal of constraining stereotypic attributes that categorised them into a rigidly patriarchal order.

6.3 TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER

This section draws from semi-structured interviews and informal conversations to discuss teachers' perceptions of gender. It illustrates how the notions of Basotho culture and pedagogic imperative to differentiate on the basis of gender were some challenges facing strategies for gender equality in the primary schools.

6.3.1 Naturalness of Gender Attributes

Teachers in this study also tended to ascribe traditional stereotypic attributes to males and females. They perceived stereotypic gender attributes as natural characteristics of males and females. For example, they construed boys' and girls' behaviour as emanating from these natural attributes which they believed were normal and unchangeable. This view of these attributes as natural also informed some management and classroom decisions made by staff in the schools. Ascribing different attributes to female and male teachers meant that the two were not treated equitably in the management and allocations of the school duties. The data below illustrates:

The theme of the staff meeting today was a report by the principal about an alleged attempted murder of a Standard 3 teacher whose house was raided by criminals firing several gunshots, and to introduce a new male teacher in the school. After introducing the male teacher, the principal said, 'I had allocated Mr Mapela to teach Standard 2 and he complained about my allocation. He told me that as a man he is unable to teach lower classes. And as a mother [referring to herself] I felt for him and understood his problem. So I allocated him Standard 6. Thanks to Ms Mary [Standard 6 teacher] who cooperated to swap with him to teach Standard 2.

(Fieldnotes: Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school)

From this extract, we learn that the principal perceived women as nurturers and care-givers. Her assumption that Ms Mary (a female teacher) was more suited to teach class 2 than Mr Mapela (a male teacher) illustrated this. Seemingly, Mr Mapela was the main custodian of this idea as he complained to the principal who in turn, "as a mother" understood him. It appears that in this school female (women) teachers were perceived to be more 'compassionate' and 'caring' for younger children than male teachers. According to traditional stereotypic perceptions of gender within Basotho communities these attributes were closely associated with baby sitting - a job traditionally performed by women. Perhaps this was the reason why, "as a mother" the principal understood Mr. Mapela's problem.

The extract also illustrates how traditional Basotho values were condoned and supported in the formal operations of the school. This was a bleak yet noticeable way in which traditional stereotypic norms and practices of gender entered the formal schooling operations to foster inequitable gendered power relations. The extract also exemplifies the relationship between the gendered social relations

and the structural/occupational relations in the school. Thus because women were regarded as subordinate in gendered social relations they were also made to assume subordinate positions in the structural hierarchy of children's development.

Teachers' perceived naturalness of gender attributes also affected decisions that they made about boys' and girls' behaviour in the classrooms. Some teachers tended to condone boys' indiscipline and misbehaviour in the classrooms on the basis that it was normal for boys to behave in particular ways. Condoning disruptive masculinities was a common feature across the schools. Teachers gave various reasons why boys manifested particular anti-social behaviour. In general, they seemed prepared to live with boys' misbehaviour, largely, without attempting to discourage it as they perceived of it to be natural. Reasons included:

'Oh you don't know, they are like that, I don't mind them because even my boys at home behave like this.

(Mrs Makara: Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school)

And:

I make them sit in front of the class because they start whispering and making silly giggles when they are in the back. [...] you know that is how they are you cannot change them, you must find something that will make your lesson go on.

(Mrs Mapuleng: Molalana primary school)

This denotes that teachers' perceived naturalness of boys' misbehaviour ensured that they did not see the need to try to challenge it. So changing the structural

arrangement of the classrooms, for example making boys sit in front, was used as recourse to address boys' anti-social behaviour. Instead of thinking of ways to address unbecoming behaviour that some boys manifested, teachers tended to find reasons to justify why boys behaved in particular ways. In so doing, they justified why they did not attempt to address such misbehaviour. They relied on what dominant and often stereotypic perceptions of gender ascribed to boy children.

Normally, what teachers condoned from a boy they did not tolerate from a girl. This was so because of perceived naturalness of differences between girls and boys (also see section 6.2.3). Such views fostered traditional myths which often ascribed polarised attributes to girls and boys. The fieldnotes from Maloaleng primary and my conversation with Mrs Matsosa also illustrate:

The Standard 7 children went to the toilet after they did revision in their class which I was observing. Their teacher (Mrs Matsosane) told me that they were working hard to prepare for the National School Leaving Certificate examinations due in the beginning of October. She also told me that all the children seemed to be doing their best except that she was worried about two little boys whom she said were troublesome.

(Fieldnotes: Maloaleng primary school)

My conversation with Mrs Matsosa went as thus:

| | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| Mrs Matsosa | : | Surprisingly they are amongst the most brilliant children in the class. |
| PM | : | I see, but what do they actually do? |
| Mrs Matsosa | : | You know in my class they will always be making something that will disrupt the lesson. If you make a small grammatical error one of them will raise a hand or disrupt the lesson showing you where you are wrong. And there is an albino boy in the class who will always laugh loudly when these [small] boys make their silly comments. You know if you |

are not sure [about your lesson] you can really feel embarrassed.

PM : Is it only these two boys who are naughty in your class?

Mrs Matsosa : Yeah, but the albino one [boy] is worse, or may be he wants attention because he is different from other children.

PM : Why do you think these boys behave like this?

Mrs Matsosa : I think these two [excluding the albino] are too clever and they get bored and want to try something new to challenge themselves.

PM : But surely you also have girls who are very bright in your class, do they behave like these boys?

Mrs Matsosa : I think girls are modest, they are and they don't show their brightness by calling attention and disrupting lessons.

PM : I see, perhaps you wanted to say more on this issue?

Mrs Matsosa : I can't but it is well known in this school that girls don't pose many disciplinary problems like boys.

PM : Okay, so what do you do to make boys stop their unbecoming behaviour?

Mrs Matsosa : I beat them but I tell you they don't stop, and when you beat them hard they make you feel like you are making them happy.

PM : Sometimes you talk to them?

Mrs Matsosa : No if you do that you are just wasting your time. Me I just leave them and I only pray that they don't fail at the end of the year.

Associating boys' disruptive behaviour with being 'clever' was one way through which Mrs Matsosa signified that generally boys had the luxury to behave in odd ways with impunity. Furthermore, it was not clear why she associated a negative and disruptive boys' conduct with a positive attribute of being clever, especially since she thought they might fail. Perhaps her perceived powerlessness (as a woman with feminine attributes) to regulate masculine (boys') behaviour informed such a perception, especially given the cultural supremacy that dominant constructions of gender accorded to masculinities in these communities/schools. Yet such perceptions might be responsible for the currency of boys' indiscipline as it was the case in these schools. Perceived naturalness and lack of

willingness to challenge such behaviour was illustrated when Mrs Matsosa claimed that trying to talk to the boys to stop unbecoming behaviour was merely a waste of time. As a matter of fact, boys as opposed to girls mostly engaged in unacceptable behaviour without being reprimanded. This might account for cases of gender-based violence and indiscipline which were common in the schools (see chapter 7).

The data also denote how Mrs Matsosa perceived difference amongst boys on the basis of the colour of their skin. She tended to speak positively in favour of the troublesome boys whom she perceived of as being 'clever' and somewhat negatively against the albino boy:

Yeah, but the albino one [boy] is worse, or may be he wants attention because he is different from other children.

(Mrs Matsosa: Maloaleng primary school)

Yet the albino boy only laughed when the other two boys had raised funny comments. He was not the root-cause of disciplinary problems even though Mrs Matsosa regarded him as 'worse' than the other two boys who initiated mischief. It appears that anything which did not represent a 'normal' masculine identity (a boy who has a 'normal', black complexion); just like in the case of femininity (modest girls) was accorded a somewhat low status and expectations. This generally implied lack of knowledge and skills to manage diversity. Perhaps this might justify why anything that was different from dominant perceptions of gender was considered in a negative light.

The fact that she perceived girls as “modest” suggests that Mrs Matsosa was not ready to accept any form of disruptive behaviour from girls in her classroom. In a way, she encouraged girls to be modest. Such encouragement had the potential to limit girls’ abilities to negotiate equitable power relations with boys. In chapter 2, the study argued that perceptions of gender attributes as inherently attached to certain individuals (boys for masculinities and girls for femininities) were a functional source of degraded gendered social relations in the schools (Field, 2001). These put children under pressure to take up some of the forms of identities because one was male or female (Moore, 1994). Because of such stereotypic attributes for girls to be modest, some of them abandoned power to boys who positioned themselves in opposition to this. Indeed, the efforts of boys and girls to attain hegemonic gender attributes were the main source of the breakdown of gender relations in the schools (see chapter 7).

6.3.2 Culture and Pedagogic Imperative for Gender-based Differentiation

Basotho culture and the pedagogic imperative to differentiate on the basis of gender were pervasive ‘discursive constructs’ which informed how teachers perceived gender. With regards to Basotho culture, for instance, teachers seemed to understand the FPE’s requirement to treat boys and girls in ways that advanced gender equality. Yet some of them were deeply opposed to the idea of gender equality. Those who were opposed to this idea believed that the notion of gender equality was fundamentally opposed to the founding principles of Basotho culture. As such, their perception of gender continued to draw from traditional

Basotho knowledge systems. Their belief was that structural and social relations within Basotho communities did not provide room for alternative perceptions of gender that might be useful for gender equality. This was especially the case in rural communities where people, including teachers, still held in high esteem their cultural knowledge systems.

To illustrate this, I explore various episodes of my conversations with the male teacher (Mr Khalana), a grade 5 teacher at Maloaleng primary school. He initially refused to complete the questionnaire passionately claiming he had nothing to say about issues of gender (see chapter 4). Conversely, his views exemplified the depth of cultural dynamics within Basotho communities which posed challenges against gender equality. In my various (mostly informal) conversations with him, Mr Khalana illustrated some cultural and pedagogical challenges inherent in perceptions of gender that supported gender equality within Basotho communities. The study believes that some of the challenges he raised might be useful to consider in the efforts to address gender inequality in the schools.

- Mr. Khalana : Yeah, I can't remember where were we? Okay now I remember I was just telling, yeah, as I told you this thing [gender equality] won't work. You see this thing [gender equality] tempers with our cultural nomenclature [how we name things in Basotho culture].
- PM : Please explain.
- Mr. Khalana : Like now, when you talk about a Minister in Sesotho, in our culture we call that "*Letona*", meaning the 'male one'. So if you take a woman and make her a Minister [the male one] – I think this thing undermines our cultural heritage and knowledge systems.

The data illustrate that according to Basotho culture some things were named in accordance with whom it was expected to take responsibility in carrying out certain duties. Naming the minister position after 'men' (*letona*) meant that according to Basotho cultural knowledge systems there was no provision for women to hold such a position. Yet the advent of gender equality (particularly through FPE) provided that women too were entitled to hold this position. This implied that within these communities, women who became ministers (the male ones) were placed under pressure, psychologically or otherwise, to relinquish their feminine essence and symbolically become 'the male ones'. The assumption of such a high status, decision-making position like 'minister' meant, for women, the rejection of femininity, as this was named and identified as a male position.

We learn, therefore, from the above data how the use of Basotho language (naming things) and their knowledge systems (meanings attached to words and things) was a cornerstone for instituting gender inequality (also see chapter 1 and 5). Such might account for widespread currency within Basotho communities where most women did not hold important decision-making positions (such as being ministers) despite their relatively higher educational attainment than their male counterparts. Naming positions of power and crucial decision-making after men served to ensure that women were prohibited from assuming such positions. It also meant that even if they did assume such positions this must happen at the expense of such women having to disassociate themselves (symbolically)

from their sense of being females. This exemplifies how profound the subject of inequitable gendered power relations was entrenched within Basotho communities. Adapting Basotho cultural language usage and meanings attached to positions in ways that affirmed the potentiality that both women and men might operate in such positions becomes central to the strategies for gender equality in these communities.

6.3.2.1 The Pedagogic imperative for gender-based differentiation

The issue of Basotho cultural ways of naming things was claimed to have pedagogic implications in the schools. These involved the manner in which teachers might explain to children the meaning of the word *letona* – the male one (minister). Teachers perceived this to be particularly challenging in the advent of gender equality where such (culturally male ordained) position might also be held by women. The data below illustrates:

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Mr. Khalana : | Then how do you teach children about “ <i>letona</i> ” when you know that even females can become the “male ones” by occupying the same position. |
| PM : | Oh, that’s how you see it? |
| Mr. Khalana : | No it’s not how I see it, its how it is. Let me make another example, if a woman wear trousers is that not wrong? [charging at me and moving closer]. How do I teach a standard 1 [child]? Remember we teach by using pictures here, and so how are you going to explain to the child who is a man/woman? – men wear trousers and woman wear trousers. How do you differentiate between the two? What language are you going to use to explain this? You see the problem that gender equality brings? |

The data above illustrate some pedagogical dilemmas inherent in efforts to infuse gender equality within Basotho communities/schools. It also exemplifies that Mr Khalana perceived of gender in terms of traditional material clothes that men

(trousers) and women (dresses) wore. As such, he perceived differences between women and men on the basis of the clothes they wore. This perception created problems in how to teach children to differentiate men and women. It becomes clear that perceiving differences between males and females on the basis of their clothes was limited. The assumption that females must wear skirts and males trousers must be further explored to establish its implications on gender power relations within Basotho communities. This study found that there was more to being male and female that extended beyond material clothing. For instance, some girls and boys performed gender in ways that showed that females and males were all human beings, made of flesh, blood and soul, with dynamically fluid aptitudes and potentialities which could not be reduced to their biological sex (see chapter 7). Appreciating this reality might help avert Mr Khalana's pedagogic dilemma concerning women and men who wore trousers.

Another important question raised by the data was the presumed inevitability to use the logic of differentiation as a means to construct meanings about males (men and boys) and females (women and girls). Making sense through differentiation is central to human understanding. As Mr Khalana suggested this was a useful pedagogic strategy to assist children to identify differences between males and females. Yet within Basotho communities/schools ravaged by gender inequality this differentiation logic was also used as a tool for ascription of arbitrary stereotypic attributes to people on the basis of their gender (see

subsection 6.3.1 above). These gendered stereotypic attributes were found to foster asymmetrical power relations between males and females in the schools.

As a strategy for gender equality, it might be useful to start considering the possibility of constructing gender by identifying similarities amongst and between females and males. The tendency for parents (discussed in the previous sections) and teachers to perceive gender in terms of differences between males and females was found to be the basis upon which gender inequality was perpetuated in the schools. Gender relations were often degraded by stereotypic differences and attributes ascribed to males and females (see also sections 6.2.3 and 6.3.1 above). So identifying similarities as logic for making sense of gender might be a powerful strategy that might mitigate adverse effects of the current differentiation logic in these schools. Concentrating on 'similarities' of human attributes (similarities amongst girls and boys, women and men), as opposed to 'differences' might help improve degraded gender relations in the schools.

Teachers saw it as important to understanding gender equality in context of the schools. They claimed that this enables understanding of contextual meanings that people attached to gender and gender equality in their local communities. As mentioned in chapter 2, one of the central arguments in this study is the importance of understanding meanings that local communities make of gender. This might help ensure that strategies for addressing gender inequality were

appropriate to the contexts within which the schools were located. Again, one of my conversations with Mr Khalana illustrates:

- PM : What do you think needs to be done?
Mr. Khalana : You know I am not opposed to gender equality as such, but I want people to apply it in context.
PM : Okay, but what do you mean?
Mr. Khalana : We need to look at the culture of the people and find ways of doing gender equality without changing or belittling their cultural and knowledge systems. In that way it will work out.
PM : Earlier I asked you what you think needs to be done.
Mr. Khalana : I think we must start this thing [gender equality] from the beginning. First, admit that women cannot be heads of the families, and must not head any institution where there are men. Look at it this way, you are older and experienced than me. So if someone says we are equal, it means I will not listen to you and the knowledge you have from your experiences. Then how are you going to give direction because I will always argue, putting my weak views against yours just because we are equal. That's why gender equality destroys families.
PM : So Mr. Khalane, are you saying that women can be empowered without saying they are equal to men?
Mr. Khalana : Exactly, this will even stop the current resistance from men and encourage them to support the initiative. We can't achieve gender equality by trying to fight against nature. That's why it is not happening in my school, we just talk about it.

The subject of age as a mechanism to institute gender inequality was reiterated when Mr Khalane claimed that being older and more experienced was a basis upon which to construct human inequality (see section 6.2.2). His denial for female teachers to take leadership roles in schools where there were male teachers might be linked to the perpetual social minority status ordained to women within Basotho communities (Women & Law in Southern Africa, 1998). In these communities seniority was constructed both in terms of the age (number of years that one has) and in the social sense (ones social standing/positioning). Since boys were ordained a social seniority status over girls, they were

constructed and socialised to be older than girls. This was meant to allow for the headship (for instance, being husbands – heads of families) that boys were expected to take over girls later in life (see chapter 2 for details).

So the fact that there was a female principal in Mr Khalana's school was antithetical to how Basotho boys and girls were socialised. It was no surprise therefore, that Mr Khalana was uncomfortable with this arrangement. Yet this also denoted the challenges that women principals, as opposed to men, were likely to encounter in these schools and communities. So Basotho cultural tendencies to ordain perpetual social minority status to females had a potential to inhibit female teachers' upward mobility within the management structures of the schools.

The data also illuminate the importance of respecting and addressing local cultural and knowledge systems in the language of expressions and meanings of gender equality. As illustrated, this might ensure that gender equality efforts in the primary schools did not undermine or belittle the existing contextual knowledge systems. In chapter 2, the study argued for the importance of understanding the applicability of FPE and gender equality within the context of Basotho communities. This was seen to have the benefits of illuminating dynamic ways in which the objectives of this policy (to improve gender equality) could be translated into practice at a school-based context (Aikman, *et. al.*, 2005). Yet the

paradox to this (as illustrated in this chapter) was that local Basotho knowledge systems were founded to infuse gender inequality.

One way of addressing this paradox might be to accept the 'bleak reality' that in order to address gender inequality within Basotho communities we also need to challenge local knowledge systems of the Basotho people. Certainly, where and how on earth had there been 'change' which did not challenge the normal ways through which people made sense of the world? Challenging people's local knowledge systems and the means by which they construct meaning (of gender) is an inherent part of change.

Furthermore, both gender equality and Basotho culture have no intrinsic qualities – bad or good. These variables are social phenomena which are culturally and socially rooted. Consequently, they are also fluid and subject to change. There is a possibility, therefore, for mutual adaptation of gender equality and Basotho cultural knowledge systems. This might not only help overcome tensions between Basotho language expressions and gender equality in the primary schools. It might also guarantee formulation of applicable strategies to address gender inequality in the schools. This study maintains the importance for strategies to address gender inequality in Lesotho primary schools to be underpinned by clear understandings of local dynamics of gender in these contexts. Intensive educative programmes must be devised to encourage teachers to support the FPE's initiative of trying to address gender inequality in

the primary schools, with the aim to discourage current resistance that Mr Khalana claimed to be one of the challenges against gender equality.

6.4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The chapter discussed various 'discursive constructs' parents and teachers used to construct gender. Most of the 'discursive constructs' that parents and teachers used to construct gender cultivated and condoned inequitable gendered power relations in the schools/communities. For instance, the study found that 'discursive constructs' of God and providence intersected with patriarchal ideology within Basotho communities/schools to institute and perpetuate gender inequality. Parents' use of the 'discursive construct' of child-adult relations for making sense of gender, illustrated the interface between age, childhood and gender. This interconnectedness between various forms of human inequality illuminated the importance of tackling wider inequalities within Basotho communities, as a strategy to address gender inequality in the schools. For instance, this might help address the subject of parents' use of their perceived authority over children (age difference) to foster gender inequality amongst children (condoning dominance of older children over the younger).

Perceptions of gender differences and attributes as intrinsic are criticised here for their insistence to allocate girls and boys into rigid social categories. The study argues that such categories undermined potentialities for boys and girls to perform gender beyond the limits of preconceived gender boundaries. Indeed,

parents' and teachers' perceived naturalness and rigidity of gender categories provided no alternatives to address inequitable gender relations in the primary schools under study.

Perceptions of gender as the ability for girls and boys to exercise their right to freedom of choice based on their abilities had positive implications for gender equality. These perceptions implied that the schools must create conducive structural and social climates for girls and boys to equitably take part in the schooling processes. However, the study criticises these views for their potential drift into liberal feminism, assuming that gender inequality might be addressed by creating equal opportunities for girls and boys. As mentioned in chapter 5, factors such as traditional circumcision and pregnancy, for instance, continued to inequitably affect children in the schools on the basis of their gender. This was so despite the fact in the official rhetoric FPE had resolved that girls and boys had equal access to education. Parents' and teachers' perceptions of gender (discussed in this chapter) mainly served to encourage inequitable gender relations. This implied that boys' and girls' continued to face gender-based challenges. Consequently, gender-based violence in the schools continued unabated. Some children continued to make choices on the basis of gender, which sometimes meant putting their health at risk (see chapter 7).

These factors suggest that the equality of opportunity approach would not be effective to address gender inequality in these schools. The schools must also do

away with stereotypic perceptions of gender. They must, instead, inculcate alternative perceptions of gender which recognise the fluidity of gender as a social construct. In this way, girls and boys would be able to perform gender beyond the limits of preconceived rigid gender boundaries. This might mitigate the negative consequences that girls and boys suffered in the context of current dominant perceptions of gender, as illustrated in chapter 7.

With regards to culture, the belief is that, given structural and social relations within Basotho communities, gender equality was not easy to accomplish. Teachers believed that most Basotho people, particularly those who lived in rural communities, still held in high esteem their cultural knowledge systems. Such systems were perceived as profoundly antithetical to the principles of gender equality. Pedagogical imperatives for differentiation also presented some dilemmas in relation to how teachers perceived of gender. This was particularly the case when viewed within the context of Basotho culture and trying to address gender inequality. The study identified the need for mutually adapting gender equality and Basotho cultural knowledge systems. For instance, adapting meanings of cultural terms like '*letona*' (minister) might ensure that women who assumed such a position would not feel alienated from their (feminine) sense of being. This might also alleviate pedagogical dilemmas that teachers faced in trying to explain such terms to young children.

In the beginning of this chapter it was mentioned that parents' and teachers' perceptions of gender played a significant role in shaping and regulating children's experiences and meanings of gender. Chapter 7 illustrates how children's experiences and meanings of gender informed children's ways of engaging with issues of gender in real life schooling contexts.

CHAPTER 7

BASOTHO CHILDREN GIVING MEANING TO GENDER

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 illustrated how structural and social organisation of the schools allocated girls and boys into rigid social categories. As a result, girls' and boys' social lives were characterised by segregation mainly organised along gender lines. Parents' and teachers' perceptions of gender reinforced stereotypic gender differences and attributes in ways that fostered inequitable gender relations (see chapter 6). These factors had considerable implications for girls' and boys' experiences and meanings of gender. Children's experiences and meanings of gender largely informed how they actively engaged with issues of gender in their social and academic lives.

As such, this chapter discusses children's experiences of gender in and around the schools. The chapter mainly draws from the ethnographic methods (conversations, observations and informal discussions) employed by this study (see chapter 4). It argues that various forms of gender-based violence²⁴ (such as

²⁴ Gender-based violence is generally used to refer to behaviour that inflicts physical, sexual or psychological harm (Sathiparsad, 2006) and/or violates males' and females' fundamental human rights on the basis of their gender. Given asymmetrical gendered power relations within Basotho communities, gender-based violence tended to militate inequitably (but not always) against girls as opposed to boys.

sexual violence²⁵, sexual harassment and physical fights) which characterised children's experiences of gender happened as a result of dominant constructions of gender. For instance, boys' attempts to uphold dominant values of masculinities or femininities and girls' subversive challenges of these dominant perceptions of gender incited most of gender-based violence cases in the schools. These, albeit not always, tended to militate against girls, thus reinforcing the prevalent inequitable gender relations in and around the schools. Girls inventively used informal schooling sites as discursive spaces to contest dominant values of gender. These contestations generally put boys who were pressurised to attain hegemonic masculine attributes in a predicament.

This chapter also discusses meanings that boys and girls constructed about their gender identities, and the implications of these constructions for gender relations and discipline in the schools. It illustrates what it meant for boys to have to uphold hegemonic masculinities in contexts where girls inventively subverted dominant constructions of gender. Yet within formal schooling processes girls had recourse to conform to dominant perceptions of gender. They feared teachers who actively reinforced dominant masculinities or femininities. This meant that during formal schooling processes girls became less assertive, reserved and somewhat reticent. Teachers' perceptions of gender and their usual precedence over formal schooling processes meant that girls' aptitudes to

²⁵ The word sexual is used in this thesis to refer to any form of behaviour that implies or symbolises erotic desire or activity. Violence is construed as any physical force exerted for purposes of damaging or abusing and this is connected with unjust or abusive exercise of power. Sexual violence is, thus, any behaviour/activity by one person/group of people who use power to coerce erotic intimacy as a means to inflict pain and to exercise control over others.

negotiate favourable relationships with boys and conditions for learning were severely constricted in these schools.

The chapter discusses what it meant for girls to have to perform gender according to these dominant constructions of gender, particularly during formal schooling processes. Finally, it illustrates how boys' performances of gender which conformed to dominant values of masculinities (such as physical endurance, being tough and uncaring) mainly created disciplinary problems in the schools.

7.2 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: A MEANS TO CONSTRUCT AND CONTEST GENDER

Attempts to allocate girls and boys into rigid social categories affected children's experiences of gender in the schools. Such factors placed boys and girls under pressure to perform gender in ways that affirmed the limiting and dominant gender roles and attributes. Concurrently, girls and boys too constructed gender in ways that fed into the pressures to perform gender in ways that were familiar. These factors bred contestations for gender meanings and gendered power relationships which culminated in various forms of gender-based violence. For instance, boys' attempts to conform to dominant values of masculinities or femininities and girls' inventive subversion of these dominant values of gender were the root cause of much gender-based violence. The study found that attempts to police, regulate and punish girls' performances of gender which did

not automatically signify dominant femininities (Bhana, 2002; Epstein & Telford, 2003) incited most cases of gender-based violence in the schools. This section discusses some predominant forms of violence which characterised children's experiences and contestations of gender in the schools. These were sexual violence, sexual harassment and gender-motivated fights.

7.2.1 Sexual Violence

Girls' narratives of gender experiences mostly concentrated on their private relationships with boys or incidents that their friends encountered in such relationships. Dominant perceptions of gender within Basotho communities embodied deep undertones of heterosexuality as a norm. Heterosexual fantasies played a major role in determining children's experiences of gender. It was not surprising, therefore that girls' experiences of gender concentrated mainly on their negative heterosexual encounters with boys. Heterosexuality in these schools was a means through which children made meaning of gender. Yet its pursuit was also a fundamental means of pain and suffering for boys and girls. This adversely affected gender relations in the schools. The social construction of boys within Basotho communities as superior to girls ensured that adverse experiences of heterosexual relationships mostly, but not always, militated against girls. My conversations with a group of girls at Molalana primary school below illustrate:

- | | | |
|------------|---|---|
| Rets'epile | : | Yes sir, there was a girl [Mosemoli] near my home who was doing standard 7 and she was in love with many older boys and even going out with them. |
| Nthakoana | : | [interjecting] Yes sir and even going in the forest with them. |

- Rets'epile : And used to enter in the forest with them. She refused to cook at home and her mother was sick [allegedly because of HIV] and she did not take care of her. When her mother died she started going out with taxi boys [drivers].
- Nthakoana : And she got sick for the whole year and now she is slim, 'cause she was going with '*likoena*'²⁶ girls [*Likoena* was a local informal term used to refer to the street prostitutes in Lesotho].
- Rets'epile : Now she is slim, she wants people to advise her, she even stopped smoking marijuana. She is no longer a '*koena*' [singular noun of *Likoena*], but they say she has AIDS.

The above conversation illustrates ways in which the HIV and AIDS pandemic within the communities around the schools created negative experiences of gender for girls particularly. They show how possible it was for girls whose parents got sick from this pandemic to fall into the same fate. According to dominant perceptions of gender, dodging school was not a common attribute for girls (see chapter 6). It was not normal that Mosemoli refused to attend school. The general impression was that girls liked to attend schools as this was their only means of ensuring a relatively better life in future unlike boys (see chapter 5). Mosemoli's experiences exemplified a genuine case where girls' lack of compliance to dominant notions of gender had negative consequences. Yet, this had the potential to evoke fear in girls who might wish to inventively perform gender beyond the confines of stereotypic gender attributes, even in situations where such risk might not be incurred. Mosemoli's experiences might have been

²⁶ Officially *Likoena* is the national soccer team in Lesotho, just like *Bafana Bafana* in South Africa. In history *Likoena* was not so strong and always got defeated during international soccer competitions. The informal reference to street prostitutes as *Likoena* illustrated normalised dominant perceptions of heterosexual intercourse within Basotho communities as a signal of defeat of girls (women) by boys (men). Since street prostitutes were readily available for heterosexual intercourse (males conquer over females), this was symbolically associated with the likelihood that the national team '*Likoena*' was being defeated in most soccer competitions. Hence the popular male utterances, "*ha li jeoe likoena*" (let *likoena* be eaten/conquered), signifying the readily access that males (who had money) were positioned to access transactional heterosexual intercourses with prostitutes which symbolised male conquest.

used as a powerful means to ensure that girls conformed to dominant perceptions of gender even if it was possible that girls' alternative performances of gender might not necessarily ensure that they went through what Mosemoli experienced.

In another occasion girls narrated a story about another girl at Maloaleng primary school who was victimised because she did not conform to what girls were expected to do in their community:

PM : Okay Puleng you said you have a story?

Puleng: One day I went to fetch water with my friends from a well and a boy called one of my friends, Mosela. We were still wearing uniforms from school. Mosela went to the boy and I said, 'hey you Mosela don't go' advising her and she said, 'please leave me alone and she went and went until they got into a donga with the boy and we left. Shortly afterwards we heard someone crying in the donga and we ran back to see, hmm, the boy was on top of Mosela, trying to suffocate her and we ran and called her sister. When the sister came she started to fight with the boy, while Mosela ran home crying. When her father came the boy ran away but later he was called by the chief and we were all called to say what happened. The boy said any girl who comes to him gets what she wanted, and said he didn't call Mosela yet we knew he called her. The boy was beaten five times on the buttocks and released. But we heard that he did that to a girl from another school and now he is arrested, and is in prison.

Stories such as this were common across the schooling sites and raised the question that girls' social minority status within these communities predisposed them to sexual violence. The perceived superiority of boys (males) over girls (females) implied that boys were likely to think they were in a better position to take advantage of girls. Coercing sexual favours to the extent of raping girls might be one amongst many ways through which boys attempted to exercise power and control over girls to demonstrate superiority. Mostly boys performed

gender in these ways in pursuit of adhering to dominant values of masculinities within these communities.

Dominant values of masculinities also ensured that painful sexual experiences (for instance rape) of girls were mostly not taken seriously by community members. It was obviously not enough for the boy who allegedly raped or at least forcibly attempted to rape Mosela to be just beaten on the buttocks and let go. Apparently, this gave the boy an opportunity to rape another girl before he was taken to prison. The data illustrate that taking gender-based sexual violence lightly ensured recurrence of such behaviour much to the detriment of girls in and around the schools. They also show how the construction of hegemonic masculine performances was inextricably tied to dominant notions of heterosexuality (Connell, 1995). In other words, boys tended to express core values of masculinities through heterosexually inclined erotic advances.

One other case where a serious case of sexual violence was taken lightly took place in the communities around Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school. This involved a personal story of an eleven years old girl (Selloane):

- | | | |
|----------|---|---|
| Selloane | : | Me my story is a painful one and I am afraid to tell people about it. |
| Liteboho | : | No, Selloane just say it, I was afraid to tell mine but now I feel better after I said it [Liteboho just told a story where rapists vandalise d her home and raped her older sister while she hid under the bed]. |
| PM | : | Okay Selloane if you don't feel free you may not tell your story, or just tell anything that made you happy. |
| Selloane | : | It's about a boy who raped me [other girls looking down shamefully] |

PM : And now how do you feel about the situation?
 Selloane : [Crying] No sir, I am afraid of him. He made me watch silly things on the TV [Video recorder], then he went into his mother's bedroom and he came with a cloth in his hand, and said 'you see how these people do it now its our turn'. I smiled and thought he was joking. I was so used to him since I was very young but he was older than me. Then he went behind me and pushed the cloth in my mouth and raped me. I told my mother and she said she would speak to his mother. But now I am afraid because he got sick and he is dead – each time I try to sleep I...[crying]... or when I am asleep I see him coming to me wearing the same sporty hat he was wearing that day – and this hounds me, I cannot sleep ...[crying]....but it happened last year²⁷.

Selloane's story further illustrates how even parents (mothers) did not take seriously cases of their daughter's alleged rape. The difficulty within Basotho communities in reporting or taking seriously cases of sexual violence has been well documented (see Chaka-Makhooane et al., 2002; Women & Law in Southern Africa, 1994; 1998). The social minority status of girls and women in these communities might inhibit girls and women's assertiveness to freely report these cases. For instance, the predominance of male adults in structures where rape might be reported (chiefs, police and magistrates) served to silence reporting of sexual violence cases. The social minority status of younger primary aged girls with regards to age, gender and coming from poverty stricken households might also ensure that it was more difficult for girls to report such cases. As illustrated in chapter 6, age was an important determinant of how girls were severely affected by inequitable gender order within Basotho communities. Reluctance to report alleged rape cases might also link to dominant social

²⁷ Chapter 4 discussed the ethical dilemma presented by this and how I dealt with the situation. I explained how this incident caused disruption as Selloane could not hold her emotions and thus called the principal's attention.

minority status of girls and women that ensured that their stories were less likely to be taken seriously than their male counterparts (see chapter 2).

Equally important was that in traditional Basotho society, when a man raped a girl (woman) the penalty was that he must pay six cattle. Somehow rape/sexual assault of girls and women were seen more as an expression of men's wealth and heroic supremacy (just like polygamy). The stigma attached to rape within Basotho communities (especially given the HIV and AIDS pandemic) also discouraged women (girls) from reporting cases of sexual violence. These factors might explain why Selloane's mother did not report her daughter's rape. The latter factor illustrates how dominant values of masculinities associated with being rough and uncaring were reinforced by attaching social stigmas to some boys' (men's) brutal behaviour (rape). As stated, this had the potential to discourage reporting of such unacceptable behaviour thereby ensuring that boys who inflicted this continued with impunity.

The data also exemplify the negative psychological effects that such brutal phenomena had on girls. It inflicted pain both at a personal level and also leaves a stigma at a social level. Perhaps that was the reason why Selloane was not willing to share her story with anyone once she realised that her mother was not helping her. Indeed, such experiences of gender meant that for some girls it would never be possible to trust and understand boys, thereby reinstating social divisions based on gender which were found to have negative implications on

gender equality in the schools. This might inform a tendency for children to organise their social interactions in the schools along gender lines, as shown in chapter 5.

7.2.2 Sexual Harassment

Harassment was a major feature of children's (especially girls') experiences in the schools. Boys had a tendency to call girls denigrating names that were meant to devalue them. Some of these names were associated with traditional constructions of women as wicked wizards who aspired to bewitch men. To illustrate:

Standard 7 girls and boys are outside their classroom today preparing the pumpkin to be cooked as part of their home economics lesson. I hear one boy shouting loudly, "hey you girls, get away from there [pointing to the place where the pumpkin was to be cooked], you are going to give us *phehla*"²⁸

(Fieldnotes: Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school)

The data illustrate that even during formal schooling operations boys continued to resort to superstitious traditional Basotho myths to justify their rejection of girls. Within Basotho communities this was meant to create suspicion and lack of trust between men and women as a means to separate them. It also justified abuse and mistreatment of women by men (for example, by their husbands). In their quest to wield power over girls boys used this traditional myth that perceived girls

²⁸ *Phehla* is a mysterious traditional Basotho *muti* believed to make men calm, soft and understanding. In traditional Basotho villages, if a man cooperated, loved and spent more time with his wife, this was normally blamed on the wife. The wife was ridiculed and insulted to be a wicked wizard who has given the husband *phehla*. Other men and women laughed at the man saying he had eaten *phehla-mokh'obolo* – *phehla the pacifier*. So being cruel, not cooperating, and sometimes abusing their wives was seen as proof that the man had not eaten *phehla*.

(and women) as a source of contamination or pollution. This invoked feelings of inferiority on the part of girls. Thorne also noted the same in American schools:

Girls [were] often defined as giving the imaginary disease called 'cooties' and low-status girls are called 'cootie queens'.

(Thorne, 1993, p.75)

Within the schools under study, such myths created arbitrary yet damaging attributes ascribed to girls. These ensured that boys had difficulty to stay for extended time in close physical proximity with girls as they (girls) were perceived to be contaminating. Boys generally used such mythical attributes to justify social distance from girls and to claim superiority over them.

7.2.2.1 Corporal punishment

The study also found that some cases of harassment that occurred during formal schooling processes were incited by teachers. This was so mainly due to the fact that most teachers upheld stereotypic perceptions of gender (see chapter 6). It appears that the fact that almost all teachers in these schools were women who had been well educated, and got permanent employment did not translate into these female teachers being committed to addressing gender inequality. The data below illustrate:

When Mrs Momotsoane came to join her class she found that boys and girls were making noise, particularly boys shouting at girls about *phehla*. Once the children noticed her they all kept quiet. She started to beat every one asking why they made noise instead of preparing the pumpkin. Some boys denied that they made noise pointing to some individual girls. Mrs Mamotsoane took turns whipping all boys and girls in this class. Suddenly two girls were crying, and Mrs Mamotsoane went to them wanting to beat them again. I heard her saying: "Why are you crying, are you angry why I beat you when you make noise? I think you are spoiled little girls". She then ran towards the crying girls, whipping them

indiscriminately as they scattered each one of them running for their own life. She only managed to beat one girl, who cried louder as she ran away. Mrs Mamotsoane said: Oh! You are still crying, are you saying its wrong when I beat you [running after the girl]?

(Fieldnotes: Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school)

The use of corporal punishment as a means of instituting discipline was a major contributor to gender inequality in the schools. This study maintains that the use of violence (corporal punishment) was not a justifiable means to institute discipline. Mrs Mamotsoane relied on the assumption that girls cried because they disagreed with her reasons, instead of assuming that they cried because they felt pain. Studies (Morrell, 1998 for instance) showed that the use of corporal punishment was intricately associated with masculinities, and that this form of punishment tended to be harsher for girls.

It argues that the use of corporal punishment is associated with continuing masculine authoritarian attitudes which compromised gender equality in the schools. The study found that attitudes that informed the use of corporal punishment were linked to dominant values of masculinities such as physical endurance and toughness. According to dominant perceptions of gender core values of masculinities were cast in antithesis to dominant values of femininities such as softness, politeness and reticence. So administering corporal punishment, which, for instance, required physical endurance, a core value of masculinities ensured that girls who were positioned as oppositional to this were likely to be the worst sufferers. This might explain why only girls cried when Mrs Mamotsoane administered corporal punishment.

Indeed, the use of corporal punishment confirmed teachers' claims that patriarchal ideologies had pervaded Basotho society to the extent that women who assumed positions of authority symbolically became the male ones. This meant that such women had to reject femininity – the very essence of their being (see chapter 6), to the extent that women teachers embraced masculine authoritarian attitudes as means of discipline. The data above illustrate that such means of discipline militated unfavourably against girls. The consequences of Mrs Mamotsoane's reactions to girls who cried merely served to exacerbate the situation.

When she could not reach her she called, "hey boys go and fetch her for me. In a moment six boys had come very quickly and were now chasing the girl [Nthabiseng]. Everyone was laughing, especially the boys, and a few girls. I overheard one girl saying, "Aooo, look at Nthabiseng, the boys are going to make a fool of her". I wondered if the teacher realised I was already in the school. I thought if she did she would avoid inflicting this misery. When the boys reached Nthabiseng [aged 12], she had stopped running and was then facing the boys, she was charging, it was like she wanted to fight, and the boys stopped a bit. Mrs Mamotsoane shouted again, "ha you boys, bring her here [pointing to herself], do you fear her"?

She did not finish saying that, the boys jumped over Nthabiseng. Now it was a fight the girl was hitting back, beating, kicking and now screaming even louder. But the boys held her down, yet Nthabiseng still attempted to kick them even when she was down. Mrs Mamotsoane shouted at the boys, "Hey you, you are stupid, hold her by the legs, she will stop troubling you. Nthabiseng was down, crying loud –no one ready to protect her. This is what the boys in this school told me they wanted – to be in a place with a girl where no one could protect her. Two boys fiercely pulled her left leg apart and two other boys pulled her right leg to the other direction. One boy put his knee on the girls' chest, and the remaining boy pushed himself to access the stomach.

(Fieldnotes: Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school)

The above data illustrate the role some teachers played in inflicting violence and the sexualised connotations of such violence towards girls in particular. These included harassing girls in ways that made their schooling experiences of gender such a miserable encounter. Within traditional Basotho communities girls were expected and encouraged to sit with their legs tight together. Normally girls who did not do this were laughed at and blamed to be sitting 'like boys'. It was a thing of shame for a girl to open up her legs especially in the presence of boys. So the data also exemplify how Mrs Mamotsoane used this stereotypic gender expectation as a 'tip' on what boys needed to do in order to humiliate and defeat Nthabiseng. Thus stereotypic gender attributes ascribed to boys and girls within Basotho communities have provided leeway for the abuse of power and control over girls (females).

I was now very angry, I wanted to disrupt this and my video camera was ready. I took a position to capture the scene, very obtrusively attempting to rescue Nthabiseng. It seems my plan is working – once Mrs Mamotsoane saw this, she came running to me, trying to avoid the camera. She said to me: "Look, you see she is silly. These children who are not raised properly, you see them here. I tried to disguise my anger. I looked at Nthabiseng, now crying with tears mixed with mucus all over her face. Her picture still hounds me even today. As she walked slowly back to the group, her head and school uniform covered with dry grass and mud.

(Fieldnotes: Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school)

Also illustrated in the data was the challenge of conducting research on a sensitive issue like gender. As a researcher, being a man and my commitment to gender equality meant that I was intricately entangled in the research processes. This created tension on what my actual role was (also see chapter 4). The cultural seniority I enjoyed as man and my irrevocable political stance ensured

that I sometimes could not sit back and watch extreme incidents of sexual harassment and violence. This might justify my sporadic intrusive, albeit limited, disruptions in cases where I could not tolerate excessive cases of violence, as illustrated above.

Such cases, where a teacher orchestrated sexual harassment of and violence against girls by boys, were common across the schools. Numerous other incidents were observed and reported which are too many to be accommodated with this thesis. Yet these issues alluded to important gender issues within the schools and Basotho communities at large. In chapter 1 it was mentioned that the statistics in Lesotho showed that more girls attended and continued in schools than boys (Women & Law in Southern Africa, 1999). But this study found that the quality of girls' schooling experience was severely compromised comparatively to boys. The statistical disclosure of high numbers of girls in Lesotho primary schools provided a symbolically rosy picture of girls' education at odds with girls' lived experience.

Undeniably, the realities of girls' experiences showed that aspects of primary schooling within this context severely militated against girls, even though formal schooling was the only means through which girls could attain a reasonable livelihood within Basotho communities. Given the patriarchal structure of these communities, which denied girls' (women's) upward mobility into important positions where they could earn a reasonable livelihood.

The following subsection illustrates how mostly during informal schooling encounters, girls performed gender in ways that challenged dominant understandings of gender. Girls' engaged in violent gender performances in response to boys who attempted to wield inequitable advantage over girls just because they were girls.

7.2.3 Physical Fights between Girls and Boys

Physical fights between girls and boys were common across the schools. Widespread stereotypic perceptions that tended to ascribe menial and servitude attributes to girls as opposed to boys accounted for boys' attempts to wield inequitable advantage over girls. As mentioned in chapter 2, policing and punishing of femininities that did not automatically signify hegemonic femininities (Bhana, 2002) were very recurrent in these schools. Girls' inventive subversion of dominant perceptions of gender was normally counteracted by boys' aggressiveness in ridiculing girls who did not perform gender according to dominant norms. This culminated in cases of physical fights between boys and girls.

Contrary to the values of dominant femininities, the study found that girls did not helplessly yield to boys' attempts to rebuke and intimidate them. The limiting nature of these values might account for girls' inventive will to perform gender beyond the confines of these stereotypic perceptions. As such, girls developed a

no-nonsense kind of an attitude against boys who attempted to compromise their freedom to choose what they wanted to be or do. Particularly during informal schooling encounters, girls were ready to fight back boys who tried to wield inequitable advantage over them. The data below illustrate:

I had come to arrange with Mrs Mamotsoane [standard 7 teacher] about remixing the groups so I could have another round of interviews with children in the following day. On my way back I saw a crowd of boys and girls gathered in a classroom and shouting. I entered and realised that there was a fight. It was a boy and a girl violently hitting each other. Some boys who were watching shouted – *etla hlola ke ea heso*²⁹ [the one who wins is mine]. The girl was on top beating the boy. This was more serious and violent. I looked around, there was no adult. I decided to intervene and stop the fight. All the children ran away so I could not follow up on why they were fighting.

(Fieldnotes: Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school)

In another occasion I was driving home from Molalana primary school and observed the following:

One girl and a boy were fighting on the road outside the school yard. Although the girl had blood coming from her nose seemingly the boy had hit her - the girl was beating that boy. The boy was shouting for help while girls and boys laughed. I stopped the car and when they saw I was coming to them they all dispersed and ran away.

(Fieldnotes: Molalana primary school)

Contrary to stereotypic perceptions of girls as ‘softer’ and ‘gentler’, it appeared that girls in these schools had developed the stance of protecting themselves against boys. In cases where it was possible to ask children about what triggered these fights, it appeared that mainly these were started by boys. Girls mostly

²⁹ This was a normal utterance by herd boys who mend cattle in the fields, especially when the bulls were fighting. It showed that herd boys liked to be associated with a winning bull, as a sign that they well knew how to look after cattle. The use of this concept denoted that boys in this school construed fighting as an acceptable means of demonstrating physical strength (dominant masculine attribute), which was rewarded by assurance of belonging. Rejection (not belonging) was seemingly the cost that children incurred if they did not win a fight.

engaged in such fights as a means to defend themselves. The following notes that I made while making playground observations further illustrate:

On my way to the playground I heard one girl (Lerato) shouting, “beat him hard Libuseng I know he is silly”.

PM : Lerato, why do you want Libuseng to beat him?
Lerato : Yes, sir she must beat Tumelo, we are tired of these boys, they always beat us when we pass by. And we must beat them so they will fear us.

It was not until I finished talking to Lerato that I saw a group of boys and girls running towards the far end of the football playground. Something was wrong – the children were fighting. I walked faster towards the crowd without wanting to call much attention. No something had gone terribly wrong. I had to run. On my way I asked one girl who was running towards the crowd too:

PM : Lineo, what is happening there?
Lineo : They are fighting sir.
PM : who are fighting?
Lineo : Mots’eo (a girl) and Katleho (a boy).

As we ran further, I saw it myself. Katleho was running for his life, Mots’eo next to him beating him hard as the crowd followed and shouted. I heard utterance of words (from boys) like, “*Halala! Halala! Katleho! A ha! Katleho is weak, I told you girls will beat you*”. Seeing he could not run faster than Mots’eo, Katleho climbed over a nearby willow tree. Mots’eo quickly collected stones with her school uniform. I felt it was really bad for Katleho. I shouted at Mot’s’eo just before she threw the first stone, “Hey you what are you doing, stop it!” Mots’eo ran away and the entire crowd including Katleho, dispersed within the wink of eye.

(Fieldnotes: Molalana primary school)

How quickly children always dispersed when they realised I was watching them indicated that these fights only happened in the informal and children’s private spaces where no adult was expected to observe. Teachers’ and parents’ perceptions of gender which conformed to inherent power imbalances between males and females, and concomitant notions of girls being physically weak, might inform this. I did not witness a case where girls fought boys in the presence of a teacher. In fact, when sitting with teachers during lunch and break time, mostly girls came to report boys who beat them and so forth. In a sense, the formal

authority that teachers had over children and the fact they mostly held stereotypic perception of girls ensured that (in teachers' presence) girls performed gender in ways that supported dominant perceptions. Yet in their informal worlds, this was not the case. This denoted how children's experiences in the schools were severely constrained by teachers' perceptions of gender (I return to some of these issues in subsection 7.3.2 below).

The data also illustrate that core values of femininities were not founded on girls' genuine potentialities. For instance, Mot'seoa's ability to fight Katleho fiercely was contradictory to dominant perceptions of gender. This meant that girls in these schools did not necessarily conform to dominant values of femininities such as being physically weak, soft, gentle and so forth. Girls were not passively socialised into these constraining patterns of gender behaviour. Rather, through praxis – the living through of experiences (see chapter 3) - they also learnt things from their schooling experiences which, regrettably, included performing violent femininities.

This was so despite denial by most boys that girls were not as physically weak as they were constructed to be. The following data illustrate:

Soon after the fight between Katleho and Mots'ea] most girls and boys had begun to play their different games pretending like nothing happened. But some girls were curiously looking at what I was going to do. I spoke to one boy who was watching the fight.

(Fieldnotes: Molalana primary school)

PM : What was happening there (pointing to the willow tree)?

Lebohang : They were fighting.
 PM : Why were they fighting?
 Lebohang : I really don't know.
 PM : Who won the fight?
 Lebohang : That girl won.
 PM : So you are happy?
 Lebohang : No that boy is weak.
 PM : Why do you think he is weak?
 Lebohang : No he is beaten by a girl, he is weak.
 PM : So a girl must not defeat a boy?
 Lebohang : Me, I can kick her and kill her, me I know how to
 fight too much.
 PM : Oh! Have you ever fought with a girl?
 Lebohang : No.

The construction of girls as 'physically weak' was illustrative in Lebohang's response. This further shows how dominant attributes of femininities were arbitrary. Such attributes did not have regards to what really happened in practice or what girls were really capable to do. As mentioned earlier, most of these stereotypic attributes served to reinforce asymmetrical gender relations. They had little reference to authentic potentialities of girls and boys in the schools. Yet their influence on how boys constructed gender was exemplified by Lebohang's blatant refusal to accept the reality he had just witnessed that a girl might defeat a boy.

It seems that children's meanings of gender were more influenced by dominant discourses of gender, than by what actually happened in their real life encounters. For instance, these discourses obscured boys' understanding of alternative gender attributes. The social realm in which boys lived which, propagated stereotypic discourses of gender, made the possibility of alternative feminine attributes unimaginable. Perhaps this was due to the fact that boys constructed themselves (their masculinities) in opposition to feminine attributes. In other

words, stereotypic feminine attributes were the very media of boys' existence as gendered social beings. Dominant values of femininities represented the means by which boys understood who they were not, which facilitated their understanding of dominant values of masculinities (who they were).

This illustrates the entanglement of human beings in the social worlds in which they lived (Burr, 1995). Not surprisingly, Lebohang's response above denoted that imagined discursive attributes of gender had much more influence on boys' understandings of gender than concrete occurrences (and experiences) in their ordinary schooling encounters. Yet the amount of pressure that this denial put boys under was unimaginable, if not unbearable (I return to some of these issues in subsection 7.3.1 below).

In most cases I did not have a chance to ask children what triggered the fights. In the case of Katleho and Mots'eo a I managed to ask them to explain why they were fighting.

| | | |
|-----------|---|--|
| PM | : | why are you two fighting? |
| Mots'eo a | : | Katleho said I am " <i>matlhare</i> " [a derogatory name used to ridicule girls who are considered to be ugly], and beat me with a stick [crying]. |
| Katleho | : | No you beat me with a stone first. |
| Mots'eo a | : | No you beat me first. |
| PM | : | You should not fight, okay! If they beat you, you must report them to the teachers. |

It was common for boys to call girls ugly names. Boys at Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school told me that when a girl thought she was clever they (boys) conspired to call her with bad names (such as Mampitla – the fat one - or Mmofu –big

breasted) until she stopped doing what they (boys) did not like. Calling girls by bad names seemed to be a way through which boys attempted to regulate girls' behaviour so as to wield power over them. Girls' resistance to this seemed to trigger gender-motivated fights. Imagined heterosexual presupposition was deeply implied in most derogatory names that boys ascribed to girls. For instance, the name *Matlhare* which Katleho used to call Mot'seoa attributed to her a lack of heterosexual attractiveness. So Mot'seoa subverted dominant constructions of gender which portrayed girls as physically weak when he fought Katleho on this basis. In the process, she also conformed to dominant constructions of gender within Basotho communities which portrayed heterosexual attractiveness as an ideal attribute of girls (see chapter 5). This illustrated how deeply entrenched patriarchal ideologies were within these communities.

It appeared that patriarchal ideologies had permeated children's understanding of gender to the extent that they could hardly construct alternative gender attributes without continuing to support other forms of patriarchal ideologies. Yet the ability for girls to inventively subvert at least some of these dominant ideologies created the hope that it was possible to subvert them. Such inventive subversions might be harnessed to derive appropriate strategies in an attempt to alleviate gender-based violent activities that compromised girls' and boys' schooling experiences in the schools.

By and large, formal and informal schooling sites presented different gender experiences for children. Girls' experiences of gender during formal schooling processes differed from how they experienced gender during informal schooling encounters. This was because during formal schooling encounters teachers rebuked girls who engaged in alternative performances of gender that challenged constraining dominant attributes of gender. Yet boys' adherence to stereotypic constructions of gender seemed to be consistent both during formal and informal schooling processes. Perhaps this was because generally boys favourably benefited or at least they were affirmed by dominant constructions of gender in and around the schools. In subsection 7.3.1 below the study illustrates the pressure that dominant constructions of gender put boys under if they failed to demonstrate hegemonic masculinities. This might be a further reason why boys tended to perform gender in ways that affirmed dominant masculinities.

Children's experiences of gender influenced ways in which they made meanings of gender. How children actively engaged with issues of gender was generally informed by the meanings that they attached to being boys and girls. The following section illustrates what gender meant for children who were constantly pressurised to perform gender in conformity to dominant values of gender (masculinities or femininities).

7.3 IMPLICATIONS OF DOMINANT VALUES OF GENDER ON CHILDREN

Since parents and teachers mainly upheld stereotypic attributes of gender (see chapter 6), formal schooling processes became archetypes for the infusion of gender inequality. As a result, children had little recourse but to succumb to dominant values of masculinities/femininities during formal schooling processes. This section illustrates what it meant for children to perform gender in line with dominant, often stereotypic constructions of gender. It starts by discussing boys' narratives and reflections on gender-motivated fights (see subsection 7.2.3 above) and illustrates what it meant for boys to be defeated by girls. It also highlights problems (including lack of time to play/study and health risks) that gender meant for girls in the schools. Finally, it denotes what it meant for boys to uphold dominant values of masculinities. Illustrating how boys' attempts to uphold these values during formal schooling processes, which mainly affirmed them, generated gender-based disciplinary problems in the schools.

7.3.1 Boys Being Physically Stronger than Girls

Even if gender-based violence tended to militate against girls, boys too incurred enormous physical and emotional cost in the process. As a result of the number of cases where girls defeated boys in these fights, some boys narrated stories that reflected on their embarrassment when they could not uphold dominant values of masculinities. Being boys meant that boys always had to endure the pressure of having to prove core values of masculinities such as physical

endurance and toughness even in genuine situations where they could not uphold this. The extract below illustrates:

- PM : Who normally wins in your fights with girls?
Thabiso : No sir girls cannot beat boys [laughing].
Mokete : Yeah but they [girls] can beat you [Teboho nodding in agreement].
Pule : No Mokete they [girls] only make noise and that's all.
PM : Teboho, tell me what happened.
Teboho : You see Palesa [girl] was in love with my friend Letlatsa [boy]. But I also wanted to fall in love with her. One day Letlatsa went to Mafeteng [another district a bit far from the Leribe district where the study was conducted]. Then I went to propose [love] to Palesa but she refused until I insulted her, and she came to slap me, held my hands [other boys laughing], hit me on the face.
PM : Then what happened?
Teboho : I went to take a stick and beat her once, she held the stick, broke it and hit me with the other part of it and I was confused [boys continuing to laugh], other boys laughed at me, hey I was confused – I did not want to let her go but I realised she was beating me.
PM : Oh! Boys become happy when a girl beats a boy?
Teboho : No, they are angry but they laugh saying you are weak, hey I don't know.

The data above illustrate that boys were perpetually under pressure to prove core values of masculinities that boys were physically strong and tough. To achieve this boys had to uphold the illusion that girls were physically weak. Such illusionary imaginations of physically weak girls meant that boys had to attempt to wield advantage over girls to prove their physical strength and toughness. This was exemplified when Teboho demanded to engage in an inequitable and coercive heterosexual relationship with Palesa. Seemingly, the attempts to forge heterosexual relationships were meant to provide space for boys to exercise power and control over girls. It was not clear why Teboho wanted to fall in love with Palesa when her boyfriend (Letlatsa) was away. One possible reason could

be that Teboho used this opportunity (Letlatsa's absence) to wield power over Palesa and to undermine Letlatsa. Yet the very attempt to wield power over Palesa was the basis for Teboho to contradict himself as physically strong and tough in relation to girls.

The data also exemplify the pressure that boys were placed under in cases where they were genuinely unable to handle fights with girls. Such was the cost of being a boy. Yet it is clear from Teboho's reflection that it was not intrinsic for him to continue the fight that he could not handle. Instead, it was fear of being ridiculed and laughed at by other children that kept him on fighting. In a sense, ridiculing and laughing at boys who could not defeat girls was a means through which children policed and regulated hegemonic masculinities. This illustrates the active role that primary school children took in policing and punishing gender performances which did not automatically signify hegemonic masculinities (Epstein & Telford, 2003).

Indeed, being boys meant that they had to endure physical and emotional pain, pressure and confusion in situations when they could not uphold hegemonic masculinities. The data below further illustrate:

| | | |
|--------|---|--|
| Tumelo | : | I fought with a girl from another school. You see after school we [boys] throw stones near the road, and other girls waited for us to finish throwing stones before they could cross the road, but this one [Nthabeleng] just passed as we were throwing stones and I hit her. She came running to me and I had books and a big jacket, it was winter. She pushed me, I fell down, when I stood up I took a stone and hit her, and she held me, pulled me down, covered me with her dress and beat me, I cried a bit, hey, |
|--------|---|--|

it was painful. She put her knee on my chest, and I couldn't see, her dress covered my face.

PM : How did you feel?

Tumelo : I was very embarrassed and when I got home my siblings laughed at me saying I was weak and that girls beat me. And now I no longer want to fight girls, I know they can beat you.

PM : Was she the same age as you?

Tumelo : Yes sir, I know that girl [Nthabeleng], we are neighbours, she is the same age as me.

In this case, boys' hogging of the natural space seemed to have been the source of the fight. As illustrated in Chapter 5 and in the previous section of this chapter, gender in these schools meant that boys had the luxury to hog the natural space. This was reinforced by formal schooling arrangements where boys were allocated huge space to use as their soccer playground. It was not abnormal therefore that boys continued to dominate and control natural spaces even on their way home. Yet the data also illustrate that shaming boys who were defeated by girls was not only a school based occurrence. It was reinforced even at home. This ensured that boys had no alternative but recourse to learn how to defeat girls. It seems that social expectations attached to hegemonic masculinities inscribed anxiety amongst boys, especially in circumstances where these could not be genuinely attained (Field, 2001). Furthermore, we learn that the power of patriarchal ideologies in these schools which inscribed stereotypic gender attributes (see chapter 6) meant that performing gender in conformity to these stereotypic attributes was, for boys, often non-negotiable (Ramphela, 1996). Perhaps this might account for violence that girls faced against those few boys who could beat them, as exemplified in subsections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2 above.

The fact that girls had learnt how to subvert dominant constructions of gender and fiercely beat boys meant that dominant meanings of gender that posited boys as physically stronger than girls really put boys under pressure. Consequently, the frustration, pressure and confusion that boys who were defeated by girls went through sometimes made them go on the rampage. To illustrate:

- PM : Yes Ramaketse why were you fighting?
Ramaketse : You, Pulane [a girl] came to the tap before me, but I wanted to get water before her. And she hit me with a cake tin on the head, I went to take a stick but she still beat me and I ran away, collected stones and beat everyone.
PM : Why did you beat everyone?
Ramaketse : There were small boys there who laughed at me when she beat me.

Again, the data illustrate how boys' perceived superiority over girls meant that they could take advantage of them. Girls' subversive denial of this was the source of gender-motivated fights. The pressure that boys who could not defeat girls were placed under seemed to incite boys to perform gender in ways that affirmed popular constructions of boys as rough and violent. For example, the frustration that Remaketse went through after Pulane beat him made him to go on the rampage, thereby reaffirming dominant perceptions that boys were violent, tough and uncaring. In a sense, his attempt to navigate the pressure of dominant constructions of gender, which posited boys as physically stronger than girls, unfortunately meant that Remaketse had to engage in violent and uncaring gender performances. This reaffirmed the very dominant constructions of gender which he attempted to navigate. Indeed, the power of stereotypic perceptions of gender within these schools meant that boys had less possibility for agency and

less choice in how to challenge dominant discourses that reproduced gender inequality (see chapter 3).

What we also learn from the above data is that boys' own meanings of boys as superior to girls, as inscribed by dominant constructions of gender and girls' subversive denial of this, was the root source of boys' embarrassments. The data exemplify that boys' performances of gender in conformity to dominant values of masculinities was the basis upon which dominant values of masculinities as inherently tied to boys were falsified. Albeit sometimes violent, girls' inventive performances of gender in ways that challenged dominant constructions of gender informed this. As stated above, such inventive gender performances by girls mostly occurred during informal encounters with boys, where there were no teachers or adult parents. Yet within formal schooling processes the meanings for girls of gender cast in different light altogether. Girls had to embrace stereotypic constructions of gender at much great cost to them. The following subsection illustrates this.

7.3.2 Girls as Polite, Reserved and Reticent

Dominant values of femininities such as being modest, disciplined, kind, soft, non-assertive, polite and tidy, ensured that the meanings of gender for girls were different from how boys were constructed. Within Basotho communities, these stereotypic values were supported by ascribing certain foods (such as sheep

intestines³⁰ and eggs) as taboo for girls to eat (see chapter 2). Formal schooling processes which mainly ensured that girls embraced these values meant that girls were supposed to be withdrawn, reserved and lacked assertiveness to determine their lives, including demonstrating their aptitudes. This was particularly the case in cases related to, for example food that were taboo for girls to eat as per Basotho culture. The following data exemplify:

It was lunch time and the standard 7 boys were queuing for food. I realised that all the boys were in the front row and almost all of them [boys] got served before girls began to line up. I saw the same pattern in the other two schools. The standard 7 teacher was also helping to serve food that day, and when she finished I spoke to her.

(Fieldnotes: Maloaleng Primary school)

| | | |
|----------------|---|--|
| PM | : | I realise that girls are only coming for their food now |
| | : | when all the boys are served? |
| Mrs Mamotsoane | : | [Laughing] Yeah, I have seen that too. |
| PM | : | Why do you think this is so? |
| Mrs Mamotsoane | : | I know that girls don't want to be the first to take food. |
| PM | : | Why? Is it not fine so they could go and play or prepare for the next class. |
| Mrs Mamotsoane | : | Oh you don't know! Girls don't want to be the first, they think boys will say they are greedy, which is a shame for girls to be. |

The data illustrate that fear of being seen as greedy meant for girls that they had to wait for boys to get served before they got served. So if the food finished girls were more likely to suffer than boys. This was disturbing, especially at Maloaleng primary school where, because of high poverty levels incidents of children who fainted for spending days without food were observed (see chapter 5). Yet the fact that Mrs Mamotsoane did not see anything wrong with this reinforced the

³⁰ A delicacy in many Basotho communities.

idea that girls' practice of coming last for food was normal regardless of the potential consequences of such conduct. For these girls, being girls meant to be disadvantaged in terms of the likelihood that food might be finished before they got served. It also meant limited amount of time to play and prepare for the next lessons as opposed to boys.

The data below further exemplify:

As always, children ran to the place where food was served once the cooks arrived. Standard 7 boys were digging in the garden and delayed to come for food. Only a few boys queued with girls to be served. The principal (Mrs Shasha) was supervising as some girls assisted the cooks to serve the food. One boy who had just got his food went to report something to the principal. I came closer so I could overhear. The boy told the principal that the egg he got was rotten. I also saw it myself as the boy showed Mrs Shasha. It even had a bad smell. Mrs Shasha scolded the lady [the cook] who brought the food. She asked her to give the boy another egg. Soon afterwards six girls also came to report bringing back the rotten eggs. [I wondered if the girls could have reported if the boy did not come first]. I saw that one girl had already eaten half of the rotten egg. Mrs Shasha was now busy attending to this matter. She went to ask another cook if they did not have extra eggs. Meantime I went to talk to the girls whose eggs were rotten.

(Fieldnotes: Molalana primary school)

| | | |
|-----------|---|---|
| PM | : | Hello ladies, I see you have been given rotten eggs? |
| All | : | Yes Sir. |
| PM | : | But why did you delay to report, look Lineo you have even started to eat the egg already? |
| Itumeleng | : | We did not want to call attention because we did not know what the teacher would say. |
| Lineo | : | Yeah, if we did, the boys would laugh and think may be we needed more eggs [Culturally, Basotho girls were not allowed to eat eggs]. |
| Itumeleng | : | And after one boy went to report, and we all know what is the problem, we went to report because they [boys] all knew what was the problem. |
| PM | : | What would you do if no boy got a rotten egg? |
| All | : | [Laugh.] |
| Motseoa | : | I had thrown mine away already. I took it back when I saw others going to report. |
| PM | : | What about you Lineo? |
| Lineo | : | I was going to throw it away. |

Motseoa : [Laughs.]

Encouraging girls to embrace dominant values of femininities meant that girls were prone to suffer inequitably from challenges that the schools encountered. In subsection 7.2.1 above the study illustrated how attaching social stigma to rape discouraged girls from reporting such incidents, thereby encouraging the incidents to proceed unabated. Here the data illustrate the effect of the cultural ascription of some food as taboo for girls, as meaning that girls became shy to the extent that they silently ate rotten eggs. The shyness for girls to be assertive was supported at different levels (cultural and social). Indeed, such a context meant that girls were unfavourably predisposed to concomitant health problems associated with eating rotten food. Surely it was not in the best interest of the school to have girls eat rotten eggs. Yet dominant values of femininities that ascribed attributes of lack of assertiveness and subservience to girls ensured that girls were asymmetrically predisposed to unintended consequences, such as health problems. In these schools gender entailed that girls had to favourably endure all these hardships, thus affirming dominant values of femininities.

Core values that girls were encouraged to embrace seemed to be commensurate with their anticipated roles as future women within Basotho communities. As illustrated in chapter 6, values that female parents and teachers embraced meant that they accepted their limited opportunities as women within Basotho communities. They tended to perceive men as head of families and having more power over them which constrained women's life opportunities. The data exemplify that formal schooling played the role of socialising girls into gender

roles and attitudes that they (girls) were expected to perform later in life. In a sense, they were prepared for a world with perceived limited opportunities for girls. Indeed, patriarchal structures of Basotho society with their social institutions such as families, churches, politics and legal systems were not meant to enhance gender equality. Thus women's (girls') position in such structures was expected to be a menial and servile one, congruent with dominant values of femininities reinforced in the schools under study.

Different meanings of gender were inscribed to boys who were expected to play dominant role in these structures. The following subsection exemplifies the cost for the schools of embracing the dominant values of masculinities.

7.3.3 Boys as Assertive, Tough and Uncaring

In addition to attempting to wield physical advantage over girls, as illustrated above, dominant values of masculinities such as assertiveness, toughness and uncaring cast in different meanings altogether for boys as opposed to girls. The meanings that boys attached to masculinities were fundamentally oppositional to anything feminine. This was partly because dominant constructions of gender perceived of boys' attributes (masculinities) as oppositional to girls' attributes (femininities). For example, within the schools under study, only girls were subjected to strict control and surveillance. Yet the large football playgrounds which boys owned extended their territorial bounds of this freedom (see chapter 5). During sports time boys normally organised themselves, had the luxury to

decide who were going to take part in schools' soccer team. Those who did not like to take part in sports did so without rebuke. To illustrate:

.....girls were playing in the netball pitch. As normal Mrs. Mapuleng was already coaching them holding a stick [whip] in her hand. I realise d she was beating each girl player when they miss or throw the ball wrongly. Just behind me was a boys' football ground. Boys were obviously in control of their own game – no teacher was there to supervise them and thus no lashing and strict controls of how to play their game. I could hear them cheering up. It seemed the boys really enjoyed their game. But when I looked at the other side – netball pitch, I saw a different picture. One girl was then crying from getting many lashes as she made mistakes. At one point, the game was stopped, all players were made to line up to get their whips since they had all made mistakes.

When I looked around I saw a group of school boys who were lying on their backs [*ba kakaletse*] near the big rocks. I went to ask them why they were not playing with other boys.

(Fieldnotes: Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school)

| | | |
|----------|---|---|
| PM | : | Yes guys it looks very nice here, can I join you? |
| Polelo | : | Yeah you can sit, but its dirty here. |
| PM | : | [sitting down] I see you do not want to take part in sports? |
| Khotso | : | Yeah, you see those boys, they expelled us, they said we are lazy. |
| Polelo | : | No, they said we don't know how to "dribble" [tricks used by a footballer to make it difficult for a rival player to take a ball from him]. But none of them can "dribble" me. |
| Moeketsi | : | You see if they don't give us the scheme [choose us to play] we come here to sleep. |
| PM | : | Okay, I see, but you don't even want to watch them as they play? |
| Polelo | : | No, I can't watch those boys, they think they are clever, they want to please teachers. |
| Moeketsi | : | Yeah, you are right, they want teachers to say they know how to play. |
| Khotso | : | [nodding in agreement.] |
| PM | : | So what is wrong with that? |
| Polelo | : | You see me, I am a man and I hate to get praise from a woman, and now if you can call them to climb the rocks [demonstrating this on a nearby rock], you will see that they are weak, they are women. |
| PM | : | So what would you like to play? |
| All | : | laughing |
| Moeketsi | : | No sir, we are fine here we do not want to play. |

The above data exemplify that boys as opposed to girls had freedom to make decision to choose what they wanted to do during sports time. The fact that there

were mostly female teachers in the schools meant that boys engaged in deviant behaviour as a means to express their rejection of femininities. In the process those boys who conformed to what 'female' teachers expected boys to do were seen as women. Somehow to be boys meant for these boys that they must be deviant and not take part in what 'female' teachers expected boys to do, as a means of dismissing femininity. In a sense, 'woman' to these boys did not necessarily mean the physical women teachers in the school. But rather the feminised (embraced by women) activities of the primary schools as a whole, as also noted by Skelton (2001) about primary schools in the UK. This was illustrated when Polelo, Khotso and Moeketsi agreed in principle that playing in the football game was about pleasing female teachers. Therefore, not playing was a means that the boys used to disassociate themselves from the role of women. So being boys meant for these boys that they must reject femininity as they associated it with attributes such as lack of physicality and toughness, which implied an inability, for instance, to climb rocks.

This meaning of gender influenced boys to engage in anti-social behaviour of all sorts. As explained in chapter 5, they cut the fence so they could avoid attending classes, and leave school at their own time. It might also justify why boys disrupted Mrs Mamotsoane's lesson pointing to the little grammatical mistakes/errors in her class (see chapter 6). The gendered meanings might also be responsible for cases of gender-based violence that were prominent in the schools as illustrated above. Indeed, valuing masculinities above femininities

meant for boys that they could take advantage of girls, particularly during formal schooling processes, to advance the course of male dominance as advocated by patriarchal structures within Basotho communities.

Some boys even used traditional Basotho *muti*³¹ to undermine female teachers' authority over boys:

It was a staff meeting. Mrs Makara [standard 7 teacher] reported that one boy (Khosana), who was reprimanded at the assembly previously for not attending school regularly, had stopped coming to school altogether. She said that, "instead of attending school after he was reprimanded Khosana began to use a traditional *muti* to make teachers think that he attended school while he actually did not attend".

(Fieldnotes: Molalana primary school)

The data below demonstrate one occasion that I witnessed when Khosana refused to admit that he did not come to school:

| | | |
|------------|---|--|
| Mrs Makara | : | Khosana, why did you not come to school yesterday? |
| Khosana | : | No mistress, I have since been coming to school. |
| Mrs Makara | : | No you were not there yesterday when I took the register. |
| Khosana | : | I was there but you only didn't notice me [all children laughed loudly]. |

Mrs Makara called some boys and girls who attested that Khosana was not at school. But Khosana bluntly refused and insisted that he was at school that day, only that they did not notice him. He even reminded Mrs Makara what she was

³¹ *Muti* was part of traditional Basotho belief systems. When I was young my father made small cuts with a razor on all the joints throughout my body and inserted a black itchy substance. This ritual was performed every year towards summer months like October. We were told that the *muti* protected us from being struck by the lightning and from 'bad spirits'. It was believed that traditional witches/wizards also used *muti* to bewitch people. I used to be very scared to sleep at night since I was told that witches/wizards used *muti* to enter in the house while people sleep and give them poison. Sometime I even reminded my father who was old, if he had not forgotten to prepare the *muti* when summer came.

teaching that day in her English session. But I suspected maybe he asked some boys who were in class that day.

(Fieldnotes: Molalana primary school)

Below is an illustration of what Mrs Makara reported in another staff meeting session:

Mrs Makara told the teachers that one day he caught Khosana with the *muti* after being tipped by other boys and took it away. She said later Khosana confided in her that he used the *muti* to make teachers not to see that he was not attending school. Mrs Makara said she did not want to put the *muti* in her class as it had a bad smell. She went to call a girl [Puleng] that she said she asked her to throw it away. Puleng went to bring the *muti* where she threw it. It was put in a Zam-Buk container. After inspecting the *muti*, teachers suspected that it was made of a hyenas' hair mixed with a black smelly substance.

(Fieldnotes: Molalana primary school)

Within Basotho communities women were believed to be wizards or witches who used *muti*, for instance, to give their husbands *phehla* (see subsection 7.2.2 above). Traditional witch doctors were often men whose main job was to cure people who were bewitched by wicked women (wizards). For instance, boys who attended traditional circumcision schools needed a strong male witch doctor to protect them from attacks by wizards. So the use of *muti* by males was then, according to predominantly male controlled Basotho communities, meant to counteract spells and evil attacks by women. In a sense, *muti* was used to undermine femininity exactly in the same way that Khosana used it. This reiterates the argument that to be boys in these communities meant for boys to undermine anything feminine, including predominantly female teachers in the schools. It also illustrates how traditional Basotho belief systems entered formal

schooling and played role to continue to undermine women in the same way as they did (through patriarchy) within the larger Basotho society.

As parents illustrated in chapter 6, boys generally did not like to attend school. That was so despite the fact that teachers affirmed and condoned their deviant behaviour far more than they did for girls. One would assume that the meanings for boys of being boys would entail supporting formal schooling processes that affirmed boys. Yet the data illustrate that this was mainly not the case. It appears that for boys, being boys necessarily meant conformity to dominant values of masculinities, which formal schooling processes mainly affirmed. However, the data also illustrate that the dominant values of masculinities, which most parents and teachers used as bases for affirmation and devaluing of boys and girls respectively not only undermined gender equality in the schools. They also undermined the schools' effectiveness as centres for teaching and learning. Strategies to address gender inequality in these schools, therefore, might not only improve girls' and boys' general well-being and the quality of children's schooling experiences. They might also alleviate gender-based anti-social behaviour that adversely impacted on teaching and learning due to gender inequality in the schools.

7.4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The chapter illustrated how boys' and girls' experiences were characterised by various forms of gender-based violence in and around the schools. Most cases of

gender-based violence were found to emanate from attempts to place girls and boys in rigid social categories. For example, incidents of gender-based violence were mainly triggered by tendencies to pressure children to perform gender within constricting boundaries of dominant values of masculinities/femininities. Generally boys seemed to construct gender in conformity to dominant values of masculinities in the schools. As such, boys' attempts to uphold dominant values of gender (masculinities/femininities) were found to be the root cause of much gender-based violence. Boys' insistence on upholding dominant values of gender were also found to be linked to the general advantage that the existing unequal gender order provided for boys as opposed to girls.

However, through 'moments of praxis' (McNay, 2000) (the living through experiences), girls performed gender in ways that challenged and falsified dominant values of gender. The study found that girls' inventive subversion of dominant perceptions of gender was also a source of gender-based violence in the schools. This occurred when boys attempted to police, regulate and punish girls' performances of gender which did not automatically signify dominant femininities. Because of the active part that teachers played to inscribe dominant values of gender, girls' inventive challenges of stereotypic gender attributes mainly took place during informal schooling encounters. The study also found that the power of discursively inscribed dominant values of masculinities/femininities superseded children's concrete experiences of gender. This was illustrated when boys continued to perceive themselves as physically

stronger than girls, for instance, even though they witnessed situations where this was not the case.

The chapter exemplified that boys' attempts to uphold dominant values of gender, which was normally counteracted by girls' inventive subversion of these values, put boys under pressure. It also denoted what it meant for girls to have to succumb to dominant values of gender within formal schooling processes. This included girls having to incur health risks by eating contaminated food as they had recourse to embrace dominant values of femininities such as being polite, reserved and modest within formal schooling processes. The study also found that boys' persistence to embrace dominant values of masculinities created gender-based indiscipline in the schools. Boys' perceived superiority over girls (and possibly anything feminine) was found to be the source of some gender-based disciplinary problems that teachers faced. For instance, boys' lack of interest to take part in sports and their absenteeism were linked to gender performances which upheld dominant values of masculinities.

In conclusion, the chapter identified one problem which strategies to address gender inequality in the schools must focus on. That is the tendency to expect girls and boys to uphold hegemonic femininities/masculinities, to the extent of being punitive to children who demonstrated alternative performances of gender. As such, strategies for gender equality in these schools should seek ways through which alternative performances of gender could be affirmed and made

part of formal schooling processes. This might be accomplished through educative programmes and awareness raising campaigns about the usefulness of promoting alternative performances of gender. It would entail ensuring that girls and boys are equitably affirmed so they could develop to their best potential human aptitudes.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis reported on a qualitative study of stakeholders' constructions of gender in the context of the FPE policy in three primary schools in Lesotho. The thesis examined how parents, teachers and children living in and around these primary schools think, act, and feel in relation to gender in their academic and social worlds. It looked at the ways in which these stakeholders engage with issues of gender in Lesotho communities ravaged by gender inequality. Based on parents', teachers' and children's engagement with issues of gender, the thesis suggested strategies that might be employed to address inequitable gender relations in and around the primary schools.

In this chapter I reflect on the findings and research process of the study. The chapter begins by reflecting briefly on how the thesis has answered the questions it set out to explore, as described in chapter 1. It then considers how the study contributes to knowledge, its strengths and limitations. Finally, it outlines the implications of the study and considers some future directions for further research.

8.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The main research question underpinning this study was: How do parents, teachers and children construct gender within the context of FPE in Lesotho primary schools? This section briefly reflects on how the study answered this question. It begins by reflecting on structural and social factors that affected parents', teachers' and children's constructions of gender.

8.2.1 Structural and Social Factors Affecting Constructions of Gender

The study found that being a religious member of the church which established the school was very important in the schools. The schools endeavoured to ensure that the headship positions were occupied by teachers who were members of the church that established the school. All the principals in these schools were women. Yet they continued to promote dominant, often stereotypic constructions of gender in how they managed the schools. Dominant constructions of gender were found to be the main organising principle for deciding on the social formations, roles and chores that boys and girls were encouraged to undertake.

Across the three schools, boys were found to enjoy relatively similar privileges of dominance. They occupied large amounts of space in the playgrounds and freedom to play on their own without teachers' surveillance and control. However, at Tsuoe-Tsuoe primary school boys who attended traditional circumcision schools were not allowed to continue their studies in the school. This was a

measure to curb disciplinary problems which were claimed to be caused by these boys. The study argued this was not an effective means to institute discipline. Denying them the opportunity to attend school merely served to place such boys beyond influence. For instance, such boys might still continue to intimidate girls (and boys) on their way to schools or in contexts where it was difficult to manage them. This was found to be a serious threat within these schools' contexts where children travelled long distances to school. So allowing these boys to continue school would ensure that they became part of strategies that schools employ to curb gender-based indiscipline.

Tsuo-Tsuo primary school also expelled girls who became pregnant. Expelling pregnant girls from school was found to be antithetical to the aspirations of the FPE policy. This policy sought to ensure that all children attended and completed their basic education (Ministry of Education, 2005). Molalana and Maloaleng primary schools had revised their policies of expelling girls who became pregnant. Yet girls who became pregnant still decided to stop coming to school once their pregnancy was noticeable. The stigma that the schools attached to pregnant girls ensured that they became uncomfortable in continuing their studies. The study found that merely changing the written school policies was not enough to encourage pregnant girls to continue to attend school. The schools needed to also change how they perceived pregnant girls. Overall commitment by all the stakeholders to support and remove all obstacles, including their

negative attitudes towards pregnant girls was suggested as a strategy that might help mitigate this problem.

Prevalent traditional circumcision schools also discouraged boys from continuing their schooling. Yet the study found that it was relatively less of a problem for boys to stop attending school than it was for girls. This was partly due to patriarchal structures within Basotho communities which enabled men to hold important decision-making positions with barely any form of formal education. This justified the general low academic performance of boys as compared to girls in these schools, hence the unusual pattern of having more girls than boys in schools as compared to other African countries and more educated females than males in the larger Basotho society (see chapter 1). Either way, the study argues that factors of male circumcision and girls' pregnancy adversely affected children in the schools on the basis of their gender. It suggests that the schools need to develop strategies to deal with these issues in the interest of gender equality.

8.2.2 Parents' and Teachers' Constructions of Gender

The study identified 'discursive constructs' that influenced parents' and teachers' constructions of gender. These were providence and God's will, child-adult relations, human rights and abilities, naturalness of gender differences/attributes, culture and pedagogic imperative for gender-based differentiation. 'Discursive constructs' were identified as socially organised means through which parents and teachers constructed their meanings of gender. These acted as some form

of moral recourse upon which parents' and teachers' constructions of gender were founded. The study found that 'discursive constructs' of God's will and providence intersected with patriarchal ideology within Basotho communities/schools to perpetuate gender inequality. It also found that parents' use of the 'discursive construct' - child-adult relations - to construct gender, illustrated the interface between age, childhood and gender. The study argued that this denoted the interconnectedness between various forms of human inequality. This points to the importance of tackling wider inequalities within Basotho communities, as part of strategies to address gender inequality in the schools. It criticised constructions of gender differences and attributes as intrinsic for their potential to allocate girls and boys into rigid social categories. Such categories were found to undermine boys' and girls' capabilities to perform gender beyond the limits of preconceived gender boundaries. This was found to provide no alternatives to address inequitable gender relations in the schools.

With regards to culture, the study found that given the structural and social relations within Basotho communities gender equality was not easy to accomplish. This was because most Basotho people, particularly those who lived in rural communities still held in high esteem their cultural knowledge systems. Such systems were found to be profoundly antithetical to the principles of gender equality. The study also found that pedagogical imperatives for differentiation also presented some dilemmas in relation to how teachers perceived gender, a dilemma in attempting to address gender inequality within the context of Basotho

culture. The study identified the need for mutually adapting gender equality and Basotho cultural knowledge systems. For instance, adapting meanings of cultural terms like '*letona*' was found to have the potential to ensure that women who assumed such position were not alienated from their (feminine) sense of being. The study believed that this might also alleviate pedagogical dilemmas that teachers faced in trying to teach young children about gender.

8.2.3 Girls' and Boys' Constructions of Gender

Girls' and boys' experiences of gender were found to be the main factors that influenced children's constructions of gender. For instance, children's experiences of gender largely informed how they actively engaged with issues of gender and the meanings they attached to being girls and boys. The study found that boys' and girls' experiences of gender were characterised by various forms of gender-based violence. In most cases this violence was found to emanate from attempts to allocate girls and boys into rigid social categories. For example, the study found that cases of gender-based violence were triggered by tendencies to pressure children to perform gender within constricting boundaries of dominant values of masculinities and femininities. Generally boys constructed gender in conformity to dominant values of gender. Their attempts to uphold these values were found to be the root cause of much gender-based violence in and around the schools.

However, the study found that through 'moments of praxis' (the living through of experiences), girls performed gender in ways that challenged and falsified dominant values of gender. Girls' inventive subversion of dominant constructions of gender also provoked gender-based violence in the schools. This occurred when boys attempted to police, regulate and punish girls' performances of gender which did not signify dominant femininities. As a result of the active part that teachers played to inscribe dominant values of gender, the study found that girls' inventive challenges of dominant constructions of gender took place during informal schooling encounters. Yet boys continued to perceive themselves as physically stronger than girls, despite the fact that, mostly through gender-motivated fights, girls successfully challenged and falsified their dominant values of gender. It appeared that the power of discursively inscribed dominant values of masculinities/femininities superseded boys' concrete experiences of gender, especially when such experiences were cast in antithesis to dominant values of gender. This ensured that boys continued to construct themselves as physically stronger than girls even though they often witnessed situations where this was disproved.

The study also found that boys' attempts to uphold dominant values of gender were often counteracted by girls' inventive subversion of these values, putting boys under much pressure. Boys would feel compelled to continue fights even in cases where girls beat them, in fear of the humiliation they received from peers and siblings when they could not defeat girls. Conversely, during formal

schooling processes, girls felt compelled to succumb to dominant values of femininities such as being polite, reserved and modest. Formal schooling processes were found to play a vital role in asymmetrically relegating girls to subservient positions which constrained girls' capabilities to negotiate favourable relationships and conditions within the schools. Finally, the study found that boys' perceived superiority over girls (and possibly anything feminine) was the source of several disciplinary problems that teachers faced. For instance, boys' lack of interest to take part in sports and their absenteeism were linked to gender performances which upheld dominant values of masculinities. By and large, this study found that dominant and often stereotypic constructions of gender in and around the schools were, indeed, the focal foundations of gender inequality.

8.3 SIGNIFICANCE/CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The key contribution to knowledge made by this study is the illumination of 'discursive constructs' that parents and teachers used to construct gender. Understanding 'discursive constructs' upon which constructions of gender were founded enabled the study to elucidate not merely parents' and teachers' constructions of gender, but also the moral underpinnings from which such constructions originated. Thus interventions and strategies suggested by this study aimed at addressing the root sources of gender inequality in Lesotho primary schools. Identifying discursive constructs that influenced parents' and teachers' constructions of gender also expanded the discourses we use to understand constructions of gender. The more means we have about

constructions of gender the more discourses we have to understand strategies that might be employed to address gender inequality.

Another area of significance is the use of the social constructionist paradigm in ways that illuminate dialectical relationships between the materialist and discursive constructions of gender. While refuting simple cause-effect relationships, the study illuminated how the materialist/structuralist conditions (Hennessey, 1993) intersected with discursive constructs (Wetherell, 1998) of gender to create meanings that influenced parents' and teachers' constructions as well as children's experiences and performances of gender. It showed how parents', teachers' and children's constructions of gender were socially constructed. Thus the study contributes insights into the workings of the vicious cycle of gender inequality, the ways in which gender inequality was reproduced yet, at the same time, how the cycle might be broken.

It illustrated the pressure that dominant constructions of gender imposed on girls and boys; gender-based forms of violence and gender-based forms of indiscipline, to shed light on the weaknesses of the vicious cycle of gender inequality. These damaging dynamics of gender inequality were also highlighted to emphasise the cost that schools endured for continuing existing gender inequality. In so doing, the study advocated the urgency to develop practical interventions and strategies to address gender inequality in the schools. To elucidate the likelihood for interventions to break the cycle of gender inequality to

be effective, the study highlighted how children performed gender in ways that challenged and falsified dominant constructions of gender.

The study also contributes to knowledge on how a research project might be an effective tool to mitigate gender inequality. To illustrate, the sporadic intrusive disruptions that I, as the researcher, made to stop excessive cases of gender-based violence proved to be effective. Teachers and children became disgraced when they realised that I observed incidents of inequitable and unpleasant gender-based activities. This elucidated the fragility of grounds upon which gender inequality was based, thereby also illuminating the likelihood of interventions aimed at breaking the vicious cycle of gender inequality in these schools to be effective. Furthermore, girls at Molalana primary school took advantage of this research project to challenge school practices that militated against girls. In fact, one of the interesting and unexpected findings of this study was how a short-term, small scale research study generated changes in the ways children engaged with issues of gender.

For example, chapter 4 highlighted how girls at Molalana primary school used processes in this research as tactics to secure their private space. Girls used the concept this study used to ensure that stories that children shared during the research were kept in confidentiality, to challenge teachers' discriminatory invasion of girls' privacy. When the principal wanted to know what I was talking with the children, one girl (Mat'seliso) told her, "no madam, it's a top secret". Girls

used this discourse as a basis to refuse to tell stories about who they went with after school. Before the inception of this discourse, this normally resulted in girls getting punished for going out with boys after school. Such a finding generates optimism that for interventions aimed at addressing gender inequality in the schools to be effective they must work closely with children, respecting and building on their existing ways of engaging with the world.

8.4 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The blending of materialist and discursive perspectives of gender as analytical foci was very useful in this study. This ensured the research to be situated and located, to explore complex power dynamics in children's relationships – with each other, with teachers, with parents and with me – and to interpret these within broader social networks. The study considered how these networks position children in particular ways, and at the same time how children engaged and resisted that positioning. It employed a social constructionist paradigm (Gergen, 1999; Burr, 1995) which explores how gender meanings were constructed/constituted in multiple and diverse ways, and how these were connected to broader social/structural relations. Throughout the study, attempts were made to understand located participants' perceptions, experiences, meanings and performances of gender within the broader structural/social gender inequality within Basotho communities. Identifying broader social/structural dynamics of gender that informed located meanings and experiences of gender provided a more comprehensive understanding of issues

involved in the constructions of gender. In turn, this illuminated the comprehensive strategies suggested to address gender inequality in the schools.

A theoretical limitation of the study was a tendency to discuss gender in terms of male (boys and men) and female (women and girls). The study assumed a *priori* that human species was unproblematically divided biologically into males and females. Even though it accepted the socially constructed nature of what constituted masculinities and femininities, the study tended not to question the binary divisions of people into two sexes.

Within Basotho communities where gender inequality abounds, research aimed at addressing gender inequality is bound to face dilemmas and stern criticisms. Yet with the immediacy of gender-based problems in Lesotho primary schools, the pertinence of research which has the potential to increase understanding and to generate solutions is clear. This is the strength of this study. However, the focus on continuing gender inequality might be seen to undermine the efforts of the current government to address gender inequality, particularly through its inception of FPE, stressing its problems rather than its successes. Thus the tendency for this study to focus on continuing gender inequality must be balanced by its probe for avenues for change. In a way, the study escaped the problem of deconstruction without reconstruction - a tendency for research to expose continuities of gender inequality without simultaneously seizing the rich

opportunity generated in a fast-changing cultural context to provide directions to vantage points for change.

As a researcher, I take full responsibility for how the text I produced is interpreted. However, there is a need to reflect on possible readings. By focusing attention on gender, the study immediately selected one aspect of parents' teachers' and children's lives, and neglected others. Focusing on one aspect of the participants' lives carried the danger of presenting a distorted picture about the participants' lives. Overall, there was always a danger that research could be harmful to the participants, delving into 'private' realms of experience and troubling gendered social relations. In chapter 4 I discussed how I tried to avoid any harm to participants. Yet the proposals for change of gender inequality made by the study certainly trouble existing gender relations.

These limitations were, certainly, not a reason to avoid researching gender in Lesotho primary schools. But they should not be ignored. The study tried to address them through reflexivity – reflecting throughout on the possible consequences of the research processes.

8.4.1 Applicability Beyond the Research Context

The study tried to balance the text as situated, contingent and partial, with the imperative for it to be applicable in other contexts and in broader debates about gender and primary schooling. But the text that this study produced was not the

only 'truth' about gender in these primary schools. It was shaped by a group of participants (parents, teachers and children) as embodied and aged human agents, talking and performing gender in my presence (another embodied and aged human agent) in a particular location at a particular moment in time. The text was, thus, situated, contingent and partial. Yet its value lies in its applicability beyond me, as the researcher and the participants in the three primary schools.

Through careful selection of the schools, participants and activities, and through interweaving theory, literature and analysis, and through reflexivity, the study explored many layers of gendered social relationships. It illustrated how these were connected in complex ways with existing gender inequality in these schools, as well as how these relationships were both enduring and fluid. Therefore, for other participants, in other contexts where gender inequality prevails, different discourses of gender might vie for priority. This tracing of relationships lies at the heart of the applicability of this study across contexts, since the continuities, contradictions and conflicts in gendered social relationships expressed in the study are not merely specific to this group of participants.

8.5 IMPLICATIONS

The study set out to explore how parents, teachers and children construct gender in three Lesotho primary schools in the context of FPE. The aim of the study was to understand the implications of these stakeholders' constructions of gender on

gender in/equality, and to learn from these how we might address gender inequality in the primary schools. As such, this section presents some implications of parents', teachers' and children's constructions of gender for the FPE policy and practice, as well as for further research.

8.5.1 Implications for the FPE Policy and Practice

Implications of this study for the FPE policy and practice have been embedded in the text throughout the study. However, a few are highlighted below. These implications should be understood within the context of the overarching findings of this study. That is, predispositions by the schools to use structural/physical identities (such as being members of church denominations or having the biological sex as a boy/girl), were foundations for inequitable gender relations. Secondly, dominant discourses of gender which attached stereotypic attributes to males (boys and men) and females (girls and women) were the ground for unequal and gendered human aptitudes.

- The schools within the context of FPE should revise policies that ensured that teachers who become principals are religious members of churches that established the school. This would ensure that teachers who become principals are selected on the basis of their qualifications, experience and demonstrate ability to provide the necessary leadership in the schools.
- School-based policies should be devised to encourage teachers to affirm alternative performances of gender within formal schooling processes. This might be accomplished through educative programmes and

awareness raising campaigns about the usefulness of promoting alternative performances of gender. Particular emphasis should be on ensuring that girls and boys are equitably affirmed so they could develop to their best potential human aptitudes. Affirming alternative performances of gender would also ensure that children's social formations, roles and chores were taken on the basis of their aptitudes and interest rather than on attempts to uphold dominant masculinities/femininities. This would help alleviate cases of gender-based violence and indiscipline which were found to be incited by limiting, often stereotypic dominant discourses of gender.

- The practice of excluding from school certain children (for example troublesome boys/pregnant girls) needs revision. In the three schools in this study, this prevented such children from being part of developmental strategies to address challenges that the schools faced. There was an immutable dialectical interrelationship between the schools and their immediate communities. This meant that even if such children were expelled from school their behaviour might still somehow affect the schooling processes. Thus denying children to attend school simply positioned such children beyond reach. This practice also denied the schools and teachers an opportunity to make these children part of the schools' strategies/efforts to ensure that children behaved in acceptable ways.

- The practice of corporal punishment as a means to institute discipline must also be revised. Corporal punishment inequitably militated against girls and this severely compromised the quality of children's (mostly girls, but also boys) experiences in the schools.
- As part of its broader strategic endeavour, the FPE policy should find ways of incorporating forms of traditional Basotho education (circumcision schools) and formal (official) schooling. This would address dominant perceptions that formal schooling (Western education) undermines traditional Basotho knowledge systems and vice versa. Perhaps this was the reason why boys from traditional circumcision schools (where they are taught about the importance of cherishing Basotho culture) posed disciplinary problems in the schools. Such endeavours would ensure that both traditional Basotho education systems and the formal schooling system become complementary rather than oppositional to advance the national agenda regarding the goals of education. This would also assist schools to find strategies for mutually adapting imperatives of gender equality and Basotho cultural knowledge systems in ways that might alleviate pedagogic dilemmas that teachers faced.
- The schools must also devise strategies to tackle other spheres of human inequality (such as class, age, sexual orientation), as part of strategies to address gender inequality in the schools. The interconnectedness of forms of human inequality and dynamics of school-community interface within Basotho communities necessitate this.

Some of the implications suggested here might not be easy to implement, especially within the context of the schools under study where there was minimal parental and other external stakeholders' involvement in the schooling processes. Perhaps the best method of achieving the aims of FPE in these schools would be to devise strategies through which to ensure that all stakeholders play a significant part in the schooling processes. This would ensure that they become part and parcel of all strategies and endeavours to address gender inequality and improve teaching and learning in the schools.

8.5.2 Implications for Further Research

Discussion of the strengths and limitations of this study (cf. section 8.3) pointed to future avenues for research, which build on and develop the approaches and the findings of this study within and beyond Lesotho primary schools.

A longitudinal study that involved spending more time in the schools and analysis of data over several years would be helpful. This might extend the findings of this study to younger children (without necessarily focusing on Standard 7 learners for group interviews). Conversely, following on children into high school would be fascinating to explore the ways in which gender beliefs, values and practices were both continuous and changing across life transitions. Already, age dynamics were found to determine the extent to which children were affected by forms of gender inequality in the schools. This means that the imminent move to

high school (with age changes) might generate change. So working with a group of children as they make this change could illuminate further active, constructive ways in which children engaged with dominant discourses of gender.

My dependence on participants' talk and activity meant that other modes of human expressions of gender were not adequately considered in this study. Thus, future studies could benefit from exploring ways of interpreting non-verbal and non-activity forms of gender expressions.

The suggestions that this study made for changing unequal patterns of gender relationships need further scrutiny in terms of how they could be applied within Basotho communities which still strongly adhere to their indigenous cultures. For instance, research is necessary to explore what it means and entails to mutually adapt Basotho cultural knowledge systems and imperatives for gender equality in the primary schools.

8.6 IN CONCLUSION....

The chapter discussed the research findings and processes, focusing particularly on the dilemmas that taxed me throughout the course of this thesis, the most profound of which was the question of agency: How much agency was possible for children to perform gender in ways that challenged dominant constructions of gender within Basotho communities ravaged by inequitable gendered social relations? The study identified ways through which through conformity to, and

subversion of dominant constructions of gender children, particularly girls, actively engaged with gender issues in ways that potentially challenged existing gender inequality in and around the schools.

Meanwhile, the legacy of gender inequality within Basotho communities/schools still endures. In this study, parents and teachers constructed gender in ways that instituted and reinforced inequitable gender relations. Girls and boys had little control to exercise agency in ways that *systematically* subverted dominant values of gender. Alternative meanings and performances of gender were not accepted during formal schooling processes. Consequently, by means of gender-based forms of violence the legacy of gender inequality continued to inequitably disempower girls and boys and disrupted amicable gender relationships. It continued to asymmetrically constrain girls' time for study and play. Indeed, this legacy continued to disproportionately predispose girls to unnecessary health and social risks. It continued to compromise the quality of teaching and learning through gender-based forms of indiscipline, including boys' absenteeism and violence.

The study made suggestions for interventions that may not be easy to implement, touching as they do not just on meanings and performances of gender, but on the most intimate gendered social relationships. In this way, the study hoped to open up new possibilities, while acknowledging that gender

struggles continue. This study illuminated not the end points, but the strivings.
This thesis is, after all, just one part of the striving.

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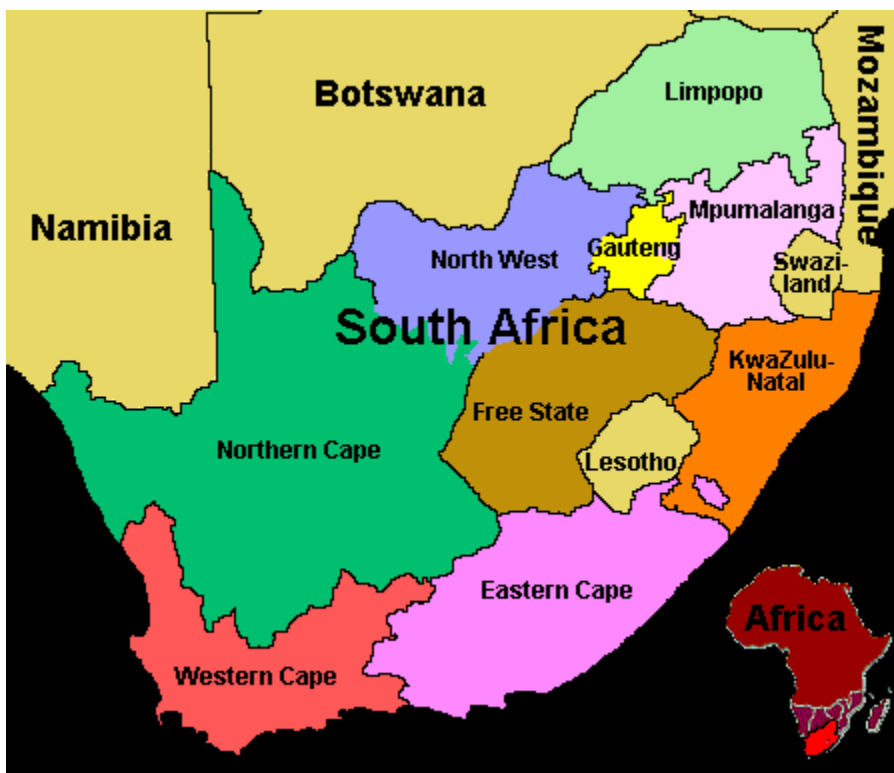
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Appendix A

Lesotho is landlocked by South Africa.



Source: Africa Deluxe Tours, 2008

Appendix B

Appendix C

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Leribe Education District Office

Dear District Officer,

My name is **Pholoho Morojele**. I am a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Durban in South Africa. While in Lesotho you may contact me on the following address: P.O. Box 449, Pitseng 320 and my cell phone number is 663137209. While in South Africa I use the following cell phone number: (0027) 82 665 8963.

I humbly request your consent to conduct my PhD research in the schools under your region. The title of my research project is:

Examination of teachers, parents and learners' understanding of gender: A study of three Lesotho primary schools.

The aims of my project is to investigate how teachers, parents and learners make meaning of gender, and the ways in which the way they make meaning of gender affect gender equality in the schools.

For more information about myself and the research project I wish to undertake you may contact my supervisor **Professor R. Moletsane** who is based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal on the following address:

Faculty of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Edgewood Campus
Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605
Tel (0027) 31 260 1024
Fax (0027) 31 260 7594

email: moletsaner@ukzn.ac.za.

I would require to talk to teachers, parents, learners and you about issues relating to gender in your school. This will take the form of observations of some school activities, holding interviews/discussions, attending some staff meetings as well as reading the school documents. There is no possibility of discomfort or any possible danger that I think would be involved in my research. The estimated total time of involvement of participants from your school in the project is one year.

There are no potential benefits to be derived from participating in the study. I will endeavour to meet participants in places where they will not have to incur expenses solely because of their involvement in the study. Where it is not

possible to do so, I undertake to reimburse the participants all financial expenses incurred to meet the requirements of the study.

Throughout the research process I will take written field notes, and when necessary an audio or video recording will be made. Once the project is finalised, and the findings made accessible to you only then the data gathered may be disposed of.

I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the participants by using coded and disguised names in the report. Schools, members of staff, parents and learners who decide not to participate are free to do so. This will not result in any form of disadvantage. And please note that participation in this study is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason.

DECLARATION

I.....**(full names of participant)** hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

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DATE

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Appendix D

Appendix E

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Dear Principal,

My name is **Pholoho Morojele**. I am a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Durban in South Africa. While in Lesotho you may contact me on the following address: P.O. Box 449, Pitseng 320 and my cell phone number is 663137209. While in South Africa I use the following cell phone number: (0027) 82 665 8963.

I humbly request your consent to participate in my PhD research to be conducted in your school. The title of my research project is:

Examination of teachers, parents and learners' understanding of gender: A study of three Lesotho primary schools.

The aims of my project is to investigate how teachers, parents and learners make meaning of gender, and the ways in which the way they make meaning of gender affect gender equality in the schools.

For more information about myself and the research project I request you to participate in, you may contact my supervisor **Professor Relebohile Moletsane** who is based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal on the following address:

Faculty of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Edgewood Campus
Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605
Tel (0027) 31 260 1024
Fax (0027) 31 260 7594

email: moletsaner@ukzn.ac.za.

You will be requested to take part in group and individual interviews/discussions. I will also observe your lessons, staff meetings, and read your teaching/learning materials and class registers. There is no possibility of discomfort or any possible danger that I think would be involved in my research. The estimated total time of involvement of your participation in the project is one year.

There are no potential benefits to be derived from participating in the study. I will endeavour to meet you in places where you will not have to incur expenses solely because of their involvement in the study. Where it is not possible to do so, I undertake to reimburse you all financial expenses incurred to meet the requirements of the study.

Throughout the research process I will take written field notes, and when necessary an audio or video recording will be made. Once the project is finalised, and the findings made accessible to you only then the data gathered may be disposed of.

I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity for you by using coded and disguised names in the report. If you decide not to participate you are free to do so. This will not result in any form of disadvantage. And please note that participation in this study is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason.

DECLARATION

I.....**(full names of participant)** hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

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DATE

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Appendix F

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Dear teacher,

My name is **Pholoho Morojele**. I am a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Durban in South Africa. While in Lesotho you may contact me on the following address: P.O. Box 449, Pitseng 320 and my cell phone number is 663137209. While in South Africa I use the following cell phone number: (0027) 82 665 8963.

I humbly request your consent to participate in my PhD research to be conducted in your school. The title of my research project is:

Examination of teachers, parents and learners' understanding of gender: A study of three Lesotho primary schools.

The aims of my project is to investigate how teachers, parents and learners make meaning of gender, and the ways in which the way they make meaning of gender affect gender equality in the schools.

For more information about myself and the research project I request you to participate in, you may contact my supervisor **Professor Relebohile Moletsane** who is based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal on the following address:

Faculty of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Edgewood Campus
Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605
Tel (0027) 31 260 1024
Fax (0027) 31 260 7594

email: moletsaner@ukzn.ac.za.

You will be requested to take part in group and individual interviews/discussions. I will also observe your lessons, staff meetings, and read your teaching/learning materials and class registers. There is no possibility of discomfort or any possible danger that I think would be involved in my research. The estimated total time of involvement of your participation in the project is one year.

There are no potential benefits to be derived from participating in the study. I will endeavour to meet you in places where you will not have to incur expenses solely because of their involvement in the study. Where it is not possible to do so, I undertake to reimburse you all financial expenses incurred to meet the requirements of the study.

Throughout the research process I will take written field notes, and when necessary an audio or video recording will be made. Once the project is finalised, and the findings made accessible to you only then the data gathered may be disposed of.

I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity for you by using coded and disguised names in the report. If you decide not to participate you are free to do so. This will not result in any form of disadvantage. And please note that participation in this study is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason.

DECLARATION

I.....**(full names of participant)** hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

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DATE

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Appendix G

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Translated from Sesotho (Please find Sesotho Version Below)

Dear parent,

My name is **Pholoho Morojele**. I am a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Durban in South Africa. While in Lesotho you may contact me on the following address: P.O. Box 449, Pitseng 320 and my cell phone number is 663137209. While in South Africa I use the following cell phone number: (0027) 82 665 8963.

I humbly request your consent for your child to participate in my PhD research to be conducted in your school. The title of my research project is:

Examination of teachers, parents and learners' understanding of gender: A study of three Lesotho primary schools.

The aims of my project is to investigate how teachers, parents and learners make meaning of gender, and the ways in which the way they make meaning of gender affect gender equality in the schools.

For more information about myself and the research project I request you to participate in, you may contact my supervisor **Professor Relebohile Moletsane** who is based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal on the following address:

Faculty of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Edgewood Campus
Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605
Tel (0027) 31 260 1024
Fax (0027) 31 260 7594

email: moletsaner@ukzn.ac.za.

Your child will be requested to take part in group and individual interviews/discussions. There is no possibility of discomfort or any possible danger that I think would be involved in my research. The estimated total time of involvement of your participation in the project is one year.

There are no potential benefits to be derived from participating in the study. I will endeavour to meet the child during school hours and therefore there are no expenses that I envisage your child to incur by participating in the study.

Throughout the research process I will take written field notes, and when necessary an audio or video recording will be made. Once the project is finalise

d, and the findings made accessible to you only then the data gathered may be disposed of.

I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity for your child by using coded and disguised names in the report. If you/your child decide not to participate, this will not result in any form of disadvantage. And please note that participation in this study is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason.

DECLARATION

I.....(**full names of participant**) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I give consent for my child to participate in the research project.

I understand that my child is at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....

DATE

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Appendix H

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Sesotho Version for the Parent Requesting Consent for the Child to Participate in
My Study

Lumela Motsoali,

Lebitso laka ke **Pholoho Morojele**. Ke moithuti Unifesething ea KwaZulu-Natal
Durban ho la Afrika Boroa. Ha kele Lesotho aterese eake ke: P.O. Box 449,
Pitseng 320, 'me phono eona ke 663137209. Ha kele Afrika Boroa ke sebelisa
phone e latelang: (0027) 82 665 8963.

Ka boikokobetso ke kopa hore ngoana oa hoa a nke karolo resecheng eaka ea
lithuto tsa bongaka ba thuto tseo ke lietsatsang sekolong sa hao. Lebitso la
projeke eaka ke:

**Patlisiso ea kutloisiso ea matichere, batsoali le bana ba sekolo
mabapi le litaba tsa teka-tekano eabotona le bopots'ehali sekolong:**

Sepheo sa projeke ena ke ho batlisisa hore na matichere, batsoali le bana ba
utloisisa moelelo oa botona le bopots'ehali joang. 'Me le hore na kutlisiso ea bona e

thusa joang hore ba etse melao le lintho tse ntlafatsang teka-tekano ea banana le bashanyana sekolong.

Bakeng sa ho seba haholoanyane ka projejeke ena oka buoa le motataisi oaka **Moprofessora Relebohile Moletsane** ea fumanehang Unifesithing ea KwaZulu-Natal atereseng e latelang:

Faculty of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Edgewood Campus
Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605
Tel (0027) 31 260 1024
Fax (0027) 31 260 7594

email: moletsaner@ukzn.ac.za.

Ketla kopa hore ngoana a nke karola lipotsong tsa ka bomong kapa ka sehlopha. Haho kotsi ea letho e ka bakoang ke ho nka karolo projekeng ena. Ke hakanya hore ngana o tla nka karolo nako e isang selemong.

Haho melemo ea letho eo ngoana a tla e fumana ka ho nka karolo. Empa ke tla leka ka hohle hore ke qobe hore ngana a kene lits'enyehelong ka lebaka la ho nka harolo projekeng ena.

Ke tla ngola lintho tseo ke libotsang ngoana, kapa ke litheipe oeleseng. Ha ke qetile, ke tla lahla le ho chesa lintho tsohle seo re libuileng.

Ke tla boloka lekunutu ka hore ke sebelise mabitso a iqapetsoeng ha ke ngola raporoto. Hopola hore ngoana haa qobelloe ho nka karolo projekeng ena. Hape ha uka etsa qeto ea ho nts'oa ngoana ka lehare o bolokolohing ba ho etsa joalo.

PHATLALATSO EA BOITLAMO

'Na.....(**mabitso a motsoali**) ke tiisa hore ke utloisisa litaba tse ngotsoeng mona, le sebopeho sa reseche ena, me ke lumela hore ngoana oaka a nke karolo ho eona.

Ke ea utloisisa hore ke bolokolohing ba ho ntsoa nako efe kapa efe ha ke rata.

MOSAENO OA MOTSOALI

.....

LETSATSI

.....

Appendix I

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Translated from Sesotho (Find Sesotho Version Below)

Dear parent,

My name is **Pholoho Morojele**. I am a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Durban in South Africa. While in Lesotho you may contact me on the following address: P.O. Box 449, Pitseng 320 and my cell phone number is 663137209. While in South Africa I use the following cell phone number: (0027) 82 665 8963.

I humbly request your consent to participate in my PhD research to be conducted in your school. The title of my research project is:

Examination of teachers, parents and learners' understanding of gender: A study of three Lesotho primary schools.

The aims of my project is to investigate how teachers, parents and learners make meaning of gender, and the ways in which the way they make meaning of gender affect gender equality in the schools.

For more information about myself and the research project I request you to participate in, you may contact my supervisor **Professor Relebohile Moletsane** who is based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal on the following address:

Faculty of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Edgewood Campus
Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605
Tel (0027) 31 260 1024
Fax (0027) 31 260 7594

email: moletsaner@ukzn.ac.za.

You will be requested to take part in group and individual interviews/discussions. There is no possibility of discomfort or any possible danger that I think would be involved in my research. The estimated total time of involvement of your participation in the project is one year.

There are no potential benefits to be derived from participating in the study. I will endeavour to meet you in places where you will not have to incur expenses solely because of their involvement in the study. Where it is not possible to do so, I undertake to reimburse you all financial expenses incurred to meet the requirements of the study.

Throughout the research process I will take written field notes, and when necessary an audio or video recording will be made. Once the project is finalised, and the findings made accessible to you only then the data gathered may be disposed of.

I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity for you by using coded and disguised names in the report. If you decide not to participate you are free to do so. This will not result in any form of disadvantage. And please note that participation in this study is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason.

DECLARATION

I.....**(full names of participant)** hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....

DATE

.....

Appendix J

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Sesotho Version for the Parent to Participate

Lumela Motsoali,

Lebitso laka ke **Pholoho Morojele**. Ke moithuti Unifesething ea KwaZulu-Natal Durban in South Africa. Ha kele Lesotho aterese eake ke: P.O. Box 449, Pitseng 320, 'me phono eona ke 663137209. Ha kele Afrika Boroa ke sebelisa phone e latelang: (0027) 82 665 8963.

Ka boikokobetso ke kopa hore o nke karolo resecheng eaka ea lithuto tsa bongaka ba thuto tseo ke lietsatsang sekolong sa hoa. Lebitso la projeke eaka ke:

Patlisiso eaka kutloisiso ea matichere, batsoali le bana ba sekolo mabapi le litaba tsa botona le bopts'ehali:

Sepheo sa projeke ena ke ho batlisisa hore na matichere, batsoali le bana ba utloisisa moelelo oa botona le bots'ehali joang. 'Me le hore na kutlisiso eabona e thusa joang hore ba etse melao le lintho tse ntlafatsang teka-tekano ea banana le bashanyana sekolong.

Bakeng sa ho setseba haholoanyana ka projejeke ena oka buoa le motataisi oaka **Moprofessora Relebohile Moletsane** ea fumanehang Unifesithing ea KwaZulu-Natal atereseng e latelang:

Faculty of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Edgewood Campus
Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605
Tel (0027) 31 260 1024
Fax (0027) 31 260 7594

email: moletsaner@ukzn.ac.za.

Ketla kopa hore o nke karola lipotsong tsa ka bomong kapa ka sehlopha. Haho kotsi ea letho eo ka bakoang ke ho nka karolo projekeng ena. Ke hakanya hore o tla nka karolo nako e isang selemong.

Haho melemo ea letho eo o tla e fumana ka ho nka karolo. Empa ke tla leka ka hohle hore ke qobe hore o kene lits'enyehelong ka lebaka la ho nka harolo projhekeng ena.

Ke tla ngola lintho tseo ke o botsang tsona, kappa ke litheipe oeleseng. Ha ke qetile, ke tla lahla le ho chesa litho tsohle seo re libuileng le uena.

Ke tla boloka lekunutu ka hore ke sebelise mabitso a iqapetsoeng ha ke ngola raporoto. Hopola hore hao qobelloe ho nka karolo projekeng ena. Hape ha uka etsa qeto ea hotsoa ka lehare o bolokolohing ba ho etsa joalo.

PHATLALATSO EA BOITLAMO

‘Na.....(**mabitso a motsoali**) ke tiisa hore ke utloisisa litaba tse ngotsoeng mona, le sepopeho sa reseche ena, me ke lumela ho nka karolo ho eona.

Ke ea utloisisa hore ke bolokolohing ba ho tsoa nako efe kapa efe ha ke rata.

MOSAENO OA MOTSOALI

.....

LETSATSI

.....

Appendix K

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Find the Sesotho Version Below

Dear Learner,

My name is **Pholoho Morojele**. I am a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Durban in South Africa. While in Lesotho you may contact me on the following address: P.O. Box 449, Pitseng 320 and my cell phone number is 663137209. While in South Africa I use the following cell phone number: (0027) 82 665 8963.

I humbly request your consent to participate in my PhD research to be conducted in your school. The title of my research project is:

Examination of teachers, parents and learners' understanding of gender: A study of three Lesotho primary schools.

The aims of my project is to investigate how teachers, parents and learners make meaning of gender, and the ways in which the way they make meaning of gender affect gender equality in the schools.

For more information about myself and the research project I request you to participate in, you may contact my supervisor **Professor Relebohile Moletsane** who is based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal on the following address:

Faculty of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Edgewood Campus
Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605
Tel (0027) 31 260 1024
Fax (0027) 31 260 7594

email: moletsaner@ukzn.ac.za.

You will be requested to take part in group and individual interviews/discussions.. There is no possibility of discomfort or any possible danger that I think would be involved in my research. The estimated total time of involvement of your participation in the project is one year.

There are no potential benefits to be derived from participating in the study. I will endeavour to meet you in places where you will not have to incur expenses solely because of their involvement in the study. Where it is not possible to do so, I undertake to reimburse you all financial expenses incurred to meet the requirements of the study.

Throughout the research process I will take written field notes, and when necessary an audio or video recording will be made. Once the project is finalised, and the findings made accessible to you only then the data gathered may be disposed of.

I will ensure confidentiality and anonymity for you by using coded and disguised names in the report. If you decide not to participate you are free to do so. This will not result in any form of disadvantage. And please note that participation in this study is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason.

DECLARATION

I.....**(full names of participant)** hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....

DATE

.....

Appendix L

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Sesotho Version for the Learner to Participate

Lumela Moithuti,

Lebitso laka ke **Pholoho Morojele**. Ke moithuti Unifesething ea KwaZulu-Natal Durban in South Africa. Ha kele Lesotho aterese eake ke: P.O. Box 449, Pitseng 320, 'me phono eona ke 663137209. Ha kele Afrika Boroa ke sebelisa phone e latelang: (0027) 82 665 8963.

Ka boikokobetso ke kopa hore o nke karolo resecheng eaka ea lithuto tsa bongaka ba thuto tseo ke lietsatsang sekolong sa hoa. Lebitso la projeke eaka ke:

Patlisiso eaka kutloisiso ea matichere, batsoali le bana ba sekolo mabapi le litaba tsa botona le bopts'ehali:

Sepheo sa projeke ena ke ho batlisisa hore na matichere, batsoali le bana ba utloisisa moelelo oa botona le bots'ehali joang. 'Me le hore na kutlisiso eabona e thusa joang hore ba etse melao le lintho tse etsang hore teka-tekano ea banana le bashanyana ebe teng sekolong.

Bakeng sa ho setseba haholoanyana ka projejeke ena oka buoa le motataisi oaka **Moprofessora Relebohile Moletsane** ea fumanehang Unifesithing ea KwaZulu-Natal atereseng e latelang:

Faculty of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Edgewood Campus
Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605
Tel (0027) 31 260 1024
Fax (0027) 31 260 7594

email: moletsaner@ukzn.ac.za.

Ketla kopa hore o nke karola lipotsong tsa ka bomong kapa ka sehlopha. Haho kotsi ea letho eo ka bakoang ke ho nka karolo projekeng ena. Ke hakanya hore o tla nka karolo nako e isang selemong.

Haho melemo ea letho eo o tla e fumana ka ho nka karolo. Empa ke tla leka ka hohle hore ke qobe hore o kene lits'enyehelong ka lebaka la ho nka harolo projhekeng ena.

Ke tla ngola lintho tseo ke o botsang tsona, kappa ke litheipe oeleseng. Ha ke qetile, ke tla lahla le ho chesa litho tsohle seo re libuileng le uena.

Ke tla boloka lekunutu ka hore ke sebelise mabitso a iqapetsoeng ha ke ngola raporoto. Hopola hore hao qobelloe ho nka karolo projekeng ena. Hape ha uka etsa qeto ea hotsoa ka lehare o bolokolohing ba ho etsa joalo.

PHATLALATSO EA BOITLAMO

‘Na.....(**mabitso a moithuti**) ke tiisa hore ke utloisisa litaba tse ngotsoeng mona, le sepopeho ra reseche ena, me ke lumela ho nka karolo ho eona.

Ke ea utloisisa hore ke bolokolohing ba ho tsoa nako efe kapa efe ha ke rata.

MOSAENO OA MOITHUTI

.....

LETSATSI

.....

Appendix M

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| PhD Research Instruments One |
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TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

You are invited to participate in answering this questionnaire. I am undertaking a PhD research in education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban. The Purpose of the research is to examine the extent to which your school promotes gender equality. I am seeking your input regarding this matter. Please answer all the questions honestly. Your name will not be attached to this questionnaire so answers cannot be traced back to you. I also wish to inform you that your participation in this questionnaire is voluntary, and that you may withdraw/decline your participation anytime you wish to do so. Your information will help me write a report about gender equality in the context of Free Primary Education in Lesotho rural schools.

Instructions

Read through all the questions carefully before answering. Fill in the questionnaire by ticking the relevant box or writing in the space provided. Should

you require additional space for your responses you may attach extra paper to the questionnaire. Please be totally honest as you are guaranteed confidentiality. No one will know which answers belong to which teacher. When this questionnaire is complete place it in a sealed envelop provided and researchers will collect it from you/your school

WHO ARE YOU?

1. GENDER?

Male ☐ Female ☐

2. AGE GROUP?

Under 25 ☐ 25-30 ☐ 30-40 ☐ 40-50 ☐ 50-65 ☐ over 65 ☐

4. HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN TEACHING?

0-5yrs ☐ 5-10yrs ☐ 10-15yrs ☐ More than 15 years ☐

5. WHAT QUALIFICATIONS DO YOU HAVE?

Grade 12 ☐ M+ Certificate ☐ M+3 Diploma ☐ M+4 and above ☐

6. HOW MANY LEARNERS ARE IN YOUR CLASS?

Under 20 ☐ 20-30 ☐ 30-40 ☐ 40-50 ☐ Over 50 ☐

PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL?

7. DOES YOUR SCHOOL HAVE ELECTRICITY?

YES ☐ NO ☐

8. WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF POWER?

LEC ☐ GENERATOR ☐ OTHER

9. WHAT IS THE MEANS OF WATER SUPPLY IN YOUR SCHOOL?

TAP ☐ BORE HOLE ☐ WELL ☐ RIVER ☐ OTHER

10. WHAT TYPE OF TOILETS ARE USED IN YOUR SCHOOL?

FLUSH ☐ PITLATRINE ☐

OTHER.....

| |
|--|
| Construction of Gender Equality in the Context of FPE |
|--|

11. Explain what you understand about gender equality in schools

12. Do you think gender equality is an important part of the primary school curriculum?

YES ☐ NO ☐

Please explain why you think so

13.What aspects of gender equality do you think should be included in the primary school curriculum?

| |
|---|
| School Policy on Gender Equality |
|---|

14. Does your school have a policy on gender equality?

YES ☐ NO ☐

a) If yes could you briefly explain your understanding of the policy

b) What else do you think needs to be included in this policy in order to enhance gender equality in your school?

If no why do you think this is so?

| |
|---|
| Actions Taken to promote Gender Equality |
|---|

15. Please explain how you promote gender equality in your classroom (e.g during the lessons)

16. Please explain how you promote gender equality outside the classroom (e.g during extramural activities etc.)

17. Do you think the efforts you take both in and outside the classroom are effective to improve gender equality in the school?

YES ☐ NO ☐

Explain why you think so

18. What assistance do you think you need in order to enhance your efforts to improve gender equality in the school?

| |
|--|
| Factors Affecting Gender Equality |
|--|

19. What factors within your school do you think affect gender equality?

20. Please explain the ways in which you think the above factors affect gender equality in your school

21. What factors outside the school that you think affect gender equality in your school?

-

22. In what ways do you think the factors you mentioned on question 23-affect gender equality in your school?

| |
|--|
| Actions Needed to Improve Gender Equality |
|--|

23. What do you think your school (teachers, principal, children, parents) needs to do in order to enhance gender equality in the school?

Teachers

Principal

Boys

Girls

Parents

24. What do you think could be done in your community/school to improve gender equality in the school?

25. Who should play this role?

26. Why do you think so?

27. Any more suggestions on how you think gender equality could be improved in your school?

Thank you,

Appendix N

PhD Research Instruments Three

Principal Interview Schedule

The questions in this schedule are intended to guide the interview and may be modified or rephrased. Should any response open an unplanned direction that will enrich the research, this will be probed.

Preamble

We are going to talk about gender equality in your school, and in particular your understanding of this concept as well as what you/your school/your community do enhance gender equality in the school.

1. Please give a brief history of FPE and gender equality in your school.
2. Explain to me how you perceive difference in boys and girls.
3. Give specific example of what you think constitute the difference in boys and girls.

4. Do you make out any similarities in boys and girls?
5. Please give specific examples of what you think constitute similarities in boys and girls.
6. Do you think differences/similarities in boys and girls affect the way they learn/what they can do/not do in school? Please explain.
7. What expectations do you have for boys and girls in the school?
8. Do you see gender as important for boys and girls?
9. What would you say are the characteristics of a school that has attained good standards of gender equality?
10. Would you consider your school as one of such schools? Please explain why you think so.
11. Do you think gender equality should form an important part of the primary school curriculum? Give reasons for your answer.
12. What do you see as the benefits of gender equality in your school for:

- a) the girls in the school
- b) the boys in the school
- c) the female teachers in the school
- d) the male teachers in the school

13. From your own observation, how would you explain the way boys and girls in the school perceive gender?

14. Please provide specific examples to substantiate your answer (concrete actions that they employ on a day-to-day basis to express this).

15. Does your school have a policy on gender equality?

16. If it does, who and when was this policy formulated?

17. What are the main points about gender equality that this policy covers?

18. If it does not, do you think your school should have this policy and why do you think so?

19. Would you say teachers in the school are committed to improving gender equality? Why do you think so?

20. What assistance do you think you need in order to enhance your efforts to improve gender equality in the school?
21. In what ways do you think the inception of FPE has contributed to gender equality in the school?
22. Please explain why you think so, giving specific examples.
23. How does the location of your school affect boys and girls in the school in any way? Explain.
24. In what ways do you think the socioeconomic status of the community surrounding the school affect boys and girls in the school?
25. Please explain any cultural practices within and outside the school that you think affect boys and girls in your school.
26. What other factors do you think affect boys and girls in the school?
27. What strategies do you think need to be employed in order to improve gender equality in your school?

28. What areas do you think strategies to improve gender equality in your school should focus on?

29. Why do you think it is important to focus on these areas?

30. Who do you think should devise and implement these strategies?

31. Do you have any comment that you think would help this research?

Thank you

Appendix O

PhD Research Instruments Three

Teachers' Interview Schedule

The questions in this schedule are intended to guide the interview and may be modified or rephrased. Should any response open an unplanned direction that will enrich the research, this will be probed.

Preamble

We are going to talk about gender equality in your school, and in particular your understanding of this concept as well as what you/your school/your community do enhance gender equality in the school.

1. Please give a brief history of FPE and gender equality in your school.
2. Explain to me how you perceive difference in boys and girls.
3. Give specific example of what you think constitute the difference in boys and girls.

4. Do you make out any similarities in boys and girls?
5. Please give specific examples of what you think constitute similarities in boys and girls.
6. Do you think differences/similarities in boys and girls affect the way they learn/what they can do/not do in school? Please explain.
7. What expectations do you have for boys and girls in the school?
8. Do you see gender as important for boys and girls?
9. What would you say are the characteristics of a school that has attained good standards of gender equality?
10. Would you consider your school as one of such schools? Please explain why you think so.
11. Do you think gender equality should form an important part of the primary school curriculum? Give reasons for your answer.
12. What do you see as the benefits of gender equality in your school for:

- e) the girls in the school
- f) the boys in the school
- g) the female teachers in the school
- h) the male teachers in the school

13. From your own observation, how would you explain the way boys and girls in the school perceive gender?

14. Please provide specific examples to substantiate your answer (concrete actions that they employ on a day-to-day basis to express this).

15. Does your school have a policy on gender equality?

16. If it does, who and when was this policy formulated?

17. What are the main points about gender equality that this policy covers?

18. If it does not, do you think your school should have this policy and why do you think so?

19. Would you say teachers in the school are committed to improving gender equality? Why do you think so?

20. What assistance do you think you need in order to enhance your efforts to improve gender equality in the school?

21. In what ways do you think the inception of FPE has contributed to gender equality in the school?

22. Please explain why you think so, giving specific examples.

23. How does the location of your school affect boys and girls in the school in any way? Explain.

24. In what ways do you think the socioeconomic status of the community surrounding the school affect boys and girls in the school?

25. Please explain any cultural practices within and outside the school that you think affect boys and girls in your school.

26. What other factors do you think affect boys and girls in the school?

27. What strategies do you think need to be employed in order to improve gender equality in your school?

28. What areas do you think strategies to improve gender equality in your school should focus on?

29. Why do you think it is important to focus on these areas?

30. Who do you think should devise and implement these strategies?

31. Do you have any comment that you think would help this research?

Thank you

Appendix P

PhD Research Instruments Four

Parents' interview schedule (Translated from Sesotho)

The questions are intended to guide the interview and may be modified or rephrased. Should any response open an unplanned direction that will enrich the research, this will be probed.

Preamble

We are going to talk about gender equality in your school, and in particular your understanding of this concept as well as what you/your school/your community do enhance gender equality in the school.

To be translated into Sesotho

1. Briefly explain the history of FPE and gender equality in your school.
2. Explain to me how you perceive difference in boys and girls.
3. Give specific example of what you think constitute the difference in boys and girls.

4. Do you make out any similarities in boys and girls?
5. Please give specific examples of what you think constitute similarities in boys and girls.
6. Do you think differences/similarities in boys and girls affect the way they learn/what they can do/not do in school? Please explain.
7. What expectations do you have for boys and girls in the school?
8. Do you see gender as important for boys and girls?
9. Does your school have a policy on gender equality?
10. If so, briefly describe the policy.
11. To your knowledge, when was this policy formulated and implemented?
12. Who formulated this policy and how were you involved?
13. What else do you think needs to be included in this policy in order to enhance gender equality in your school?

14. If not, what is your comment about this fact? E.g do you think your school must have this policy and why? Or is it ok that your school does not have it?
15. Do you think boys and girls should be given the same opportunities to attend and continue in school? Explain why you think so.
16. Would you say your school/community gives the same opportunities for boys and girls to attend and continue in school? Explain.
17. Do you think the inception of FPE has in any way contributed to gender equality in the school?
18. Please explain why you think so, giving specific examples.
19. Describe any factors at home or in school that you think affect boys and girls in the school?
20. In what ways do you think these factors affect boys and girls in the school?
21. Please explain any role you play in the school that you think helps improve gender equality?

22. What role do you play in your community to improve gender equality in the school?

23. What else do you think you could do to promote gender equality in the school?

24. What assistance do you think you need?

25. Who should provide this assistance?

26. Any comment or question you wish to raise concerning our discussion?

Thank you,

Appendix Q

Sesotho Version of Parents' Interview Schedule

Selelekela

Retlo bua ka litaba tsa bohlokoa ba tekano ea banana le bashanyana sekolong sena, le hore na o nahana hore ho ka etsoa joang ho akofisa le ho ntlafatsa tana ena.

1. Ka bokhutoanyane hlalosa nalane ea tekano ea banana le bashanyana sekolong sena.

2. Hlalosa hore na maikutlo a hao ke afe mabapi le phapang pakeng tsa banana le bashanyana.

3 Fana ka mohlala hore na ke e ng e etsang phapang pakeng tsa banana le bashanyana.

4 Na hona le moo ba t'soanang teng? Hlalosa.

5. Ke kopa hore o fane ka mohlala hore na ke eng e etsang hore ha ts'oane.

6. Na o nahana hore phapang kapa ho t'soana pakeng tsa banana le bashanya ho ka ama mokhoa oo ba itutang ka ona? Hlalosa.

7. Ke litebello life tseo o nang le tsona ho banana le bashanya?
8. Na o bona taba ea tekatekano ea banana le bashanyana ele bohlokoa?
9. Na sekolo sa heno sena le leano mabapi le litaba tsa tekano ea banana le bashanyana?
10. U nahana hore keng e ka etsuoang ho ntlafatsa tekano ea banana le bashanyana sekolong see?
11. Bolela mabaka ao ka ona o nahanang hore ho bohlokoa hore banana le bashanyana ba khothaletsoe le ho ts'eetsoa ka ho ts'oana hore ha kene le ho tsoelapele ka lithuto tsa bona.
12. Hlalosa hore na leano la thuto e sa lefelloeng le thusitse joang mabapi le tekatekano ea banana le bashanyana sekolong

Ke ea Leboha,

Appendix R

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| PhD Research Instruments Seven |
|---------------------------------------|

Observations

The following school events will be observed throughout the research process, and notes will be taken on how issues relating to gender manifest. Without being any intrusive I may interrupt some activities to seek clarity from teachers or boys and girls on certain issues.

1. School assembly
2. Classroom activities
3. Boys and girls play at break and lunch time
4. Feeding scheme
5. School chores
6. Sports
7. Toilet usage

Appendix S

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| PhD Research Instruments Six |
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Document Analysis

1. School policy and mission statements

To document ways in which these documents cover issues of gender equality

2. Minutes of previous and current School's Governing body and staff meetings

Capture specific instances or discussions that covered issues of gender

3. School's attendance registers

To document learners' attendance records beginning with Grade one in 2000, Grade two in 2001 and so forth until Grade 6 in 2005. Have to randomly sample five days per month for one academic year in all Grades mentioned for further analysis

4. Text books and, Learning and teaching Materials

To document how words, pictures etc are used to reinforce gender stereotypes or how their usage portrays what messages about gender

5. Drop-out records

Since the end of 2000 with Grade one and so on until the end of 2005 with Grade 6

5. Assessment records

To record end of year pass rates of learners (boys and girls) who began Grade one in 2000